

An Essay on the Freedom of the Will  
in God and in Creatures ...

London, Roberts, 1732.

John W. Yolle  
Jan 1959

A N  
E S S A Y  
ON THE  
Freedom of Will  
In GOD and in C R E A T U R E S ,  
AND ON  
Various Subjects connected therewith.

V I Z .

The Ideas of LIBERTY and NECESSITY ;  
The Causes of the Determination of the  
Will ; The Use of the Understanding  
to direct, not to determine it ;  
The Liberty of GOD as a Creator, a Go-  
vernour, and a Benefactor ;  
The Doctrine of FATALITY ; The Spring  
of Moral Good and Evil ; The Difference  
between Moral and Positive Laws ;  
The Sin and Fall of Man, and the Free  
Grace of GOD ;  
The Rewardableness of Faith in the Gospel,  
and the criminal Nature of Infidelity .

---

*A Vero nil nisi Verum sequitur :  
Uno Absurdo dato, mille sequuntur.*

---

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ROBERTS, near the Oxford-Arms, in  
Warwick-Lane. M.DCC XXXII.  
(Price Eighteen Pence.)



---



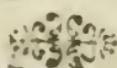
---

T H E  
C O N T E N T S.

<b>S</b> ECT. I. <i>Of Liberty and Necessity, and how far they are consistent.</i>	Page 1
<i>Several Kinds of Liberty and Necessity.</i>	2
<i>How far the Will has a hand in Judge- ment.</i>	13
<b>S</b> ect. II. <i>What determines the Will to choose or act.</i>	17
<i>Whether the last Dictate of the Under- standing, or the greatest apparent Good.</i>	17, 18
<i>Or Uneasiness; as Mr. Locke affirms.</i>	22
<i>Or is the Will its own Determiner?</i>	26
<b>S</b> ect. III. <i>The Will is a self-determining Power.</i>	28
<i>Even in Things where superior Fitness does appear.</i>	31
<i>And especially where no superior Fitness appears.</i>	36
<b>S</b> ect. IV. <i>How the Will of God determines itself.</i>	39
<i>As a Creator in forming Creatures.</i>	41, 44
<i>As a Governor in making Laws.</i>	42, 48
<b>S</b> ect. V. <i>The Advantages of this Scheme of Liberty,</i>	50

# CONTENTS.

<i>The Idea of a self-moving Power derived hence, &amp;c.</i>	p. 50
<i>The Spring and Distinction of Vice and Virtue.</i>	53
<i>How Sin came into the World.</i>	56, 57
<i>The Rewardableness of Faith, and the criminal Nature of Infidelity.</i>	58
<i>The free Bounty and Favour of God to Creatures.</i>	60
<i>Distinction between Moral and Positive Laws.</i>	62
<i>The Grace of God, how far it may ope- rate on the Souls of Men.</i>	63
<i>Sect. VI. Objections against this Scheme answered.</i>	65
<i>Sect. VII. The Difficulties which attend the contrary Scheme.</i>	81
<i>The Doctrine of Fatality introduced into the Creation, or World of Nature.</i>	82, &c.
<i>The free Favour of God annull'd or di- minished.</i>	89
<i>Possibles and Necessaries confounded.</i>	91
<i>Moral and Positive Laws but little di- stinguished.</i>	94, 95
<i>Fatality introduced into the Moral World.</i>	97
<i>Harsh Interpretation of many Scriptures.</i>	99
<i>The Scripture favours the Author's Sen- timents.</i>	105, 106



---

---

A N  
E S S A Y  
O N  
*The Freedom of Will in GOD  
and in CREATURES.*

---

## SECT. I.

*Of Liberty and Necessity, and how  
far they are consistent.*

**L**IBERTY is a Word which has been attributed to Ideas very distinct and different; and *Necessity* has also its various Significations: hence proceeds that Confusion and seeming Inconsistency which sometimes appears among our Thoughts, and may have been found perhaps in some Writings on this Subject; nor is it easy to avoid it in an Argument of so much Difficulty: And therefore I bespeak the Candor of the Reader while I am attempting to strike a little

## *Liberty and Necessity*

Light into a Theme, which has been surrounded with much Darkness and Perplexity.

I shall not run into a wild chace of all the Distinctions of *Necessity* which the Schools have taught us: but it seems to be needful for us to take notice in general, that a thing is called *necessary*, when *it must be so, and cannot be otherwise*, whatsoever be the Reason and Cause of this *Necessity*.

If the Cause or Reason of this *Necessity* arise from the very nature of the thing, it is called an *internal and natural Necessity*; so a Bowl may be said necessarily to roll down a Hill: and a Beast necessarily to avoid the Fire, or to quench its Thirst when a Fountain is near. But if this *Necessity* arise from some apparent outward constraint or restraint, then it is called an *external or forcible Necessity*: Thus a Bowl is driven up Hill by the force of a Stroke impelling it; or a Beast necessarily goes thro' the Fire when he is constrain'd or dragg'd into it by outward force; or an Ox necessarily abstains from Drink when he is withheld by Bars or Fetters from a neighbouring Fountain. What other Distinctions of *Necessity* are needful, will afterwards appear.

*Liberty* stands generally in opposition to *Necessity* of each kind, both inward and outward; both a *Necessity of Nature*, and

a Necessity of *Force*: and that is certainly the best and most proper sense of it; yet there seem to be some cases wherein those Actions which are *necessary*, have also been called *free*: and if we would make a more careful inquiry into this matter, we must take a brief survey of the different sorts or kinds of *Liberty*, i. e. the different Cases to which this word is apply'd, and then we may better judge how far *Necessity* is consistent or inconsistent with it.

I. *Liberty* or *Freedom* may be attributed in a figurative sense to *inanimate Beings*; so we say by way of Simile, *free as the Air or Wind*. It is yet a little *more properly* apply'd to *Animals*; so a Bird released from its Cage is *free*, or a Horse from his Bridle or Harness. All manner of *outward Necessity*, i. e. Restraint or Constraint, is inconsistent with this Freedom of Brute Creatures. But there are some Actions which a Beast performs with a kind of *brutal Freedom*, and yet by a sort of natural Necessity also. A Horse naturally avoids the Fire by an *inward Necessity*, tho' he doth it *freely*, i. e. with all the Freedom he has: and when he is thirsty, he *freely* drinks, yet it is by an *inward or natural Necessity*.

But leaving these Ideas of a less proper Freedom, let us rather consider *Liberty* in its more proper sense, as it belongs to Men

## 4      *Liberty and Necessity*

or other intelligent Creatures, or to God himself, who is the Creator.

II. *Liberty*, as ascribed to intellectual Beings, is either *Moral* or *Natural*. *Natural Liberty* has various Ideas, as will appear immediately. *Moral Liberty* is a Freedom from all superior Authority: in this sense, God alone is universally and perfectly *free*, having no Authority superior to himself. But there are many instances of particular *moral Freedom* among Men; an *Apprentice* is *free* from the Authority of his Master when he has served seven Years; and the *Lad* is *free* from the Government of his Tutor when his Childhood is past, and he commences Man. 'Tis no longer *necessary* that the Apprentice should obey his Master's Commands, nor the Youth those of his Tutor, which it was *morally necessary* or plain Duty for them to obey before. In this *moral* sense, *Necessity* or *Restraint* and *Liberty* are evidently inconsistent.

III. *Natural Liberty* must be distinguish'd into a *Liberty of Volition*, or a *Liberty of Action*: The first is a *Liberty of the Will*, the last is rather a *Liberty of the executive Powers*\*. 'Tis this *Freedom of Volition* or

---

\* Note. When *Action* is contradistinguish'd from *Volition*, I mean chiefly the *Action* or *Motion* of the *inferior* and *executive Powers*; for in the *Nature of Things*, the *Will* is the chief

or *chusing* which is properly the Liberty of an intelligent Being, and the chief Subject of Dispute, and not the Freedom of the inferior Powers from Restraint or Constraint in *acting* or executing the Determinations of the Will. There are many cases wherein the Will may be *free to chuse*, but the Man is not *free to act*. The Freedom of the Will is very consistent with the Restraint of Action: so a Person whose Mouth is stopp'd, may be willing or chuse either to speak or to keep silence; and he is free in this *Choice*, so far as the Volition goes; but he is not free to *act*, for he hath not power to speak if he did chuse it; he is under a necessity to keep silence. Suppose *Simon* and *Lepidus* were lock'd up in Prison with their Friend *Crato*: *Lepidus* chuses to go out, but cannot, and is uneasy; *Simon* chuses to tarry there, and there he tarries chearfully: They are equally *free* in their different Choice and Volition; but both are under a *Necessity* to act the same thing, *viz.* to abide in Prison, one according to his choice, the other against it.

IV. The Liberty of the Will is generally distinguish'd by Writers on this Subject,

B 3

into

---

chief Agent, and *Volition* is Action in the properest sense; tho' I fear it deviates too much from the sense of Mankind to permit the words *Action* and *Agent* to be apply'd only to the *Will*, and to nothing else, as some Writers have done in his Controversy.

## 6      *Liberty and Necessity*

into a *Liberty of Indifference or Choice*, and a *Liberty of Spontaneity or Voluntariness*.

Actions of the Soul are said to be free with this *spontaneous* or *voluntary* Freedom, when the Soul of Man pursues any Object or performs any Act, or chuscs any Pleasure, without any consideration whether it can chuse any other Object, or perform the contrary Action. This is a most large and extensive sense of the word *Liberty*; for in this sense every Act of the Will is and must be *free*, for every Act is *spontaneous* or *voluntary*; and indeed this *Freedom* is but a dilute Idea, for it signifies nothing more than that it is an *Act of the Will*. So we are said with the greatest *Freedom* to do those Actions to which we have the strongest inclination, and wherein we take the greatest pleasure; not considering or enquiring whether these Actions are *necessary* or no: that Consideration does not come into this Notion of *Liberty*. 'Tis a common instance in this Case, that all sensible Beings with *Spontaneity* and *Freedom* pursue what they call *Pleasure* or *Happiness*; yet they are generally said to do this by a sort of *Necessity* too, because it belongs to their Nature, and they cannot do otherwise. This is attributed to Brutes as well as Men. So the Blessed

above with perfect Liberty love God ; yet so constantly, that it appears almost natural and necessary. So God with the strongest and most exalted Freedom, and yet unchangeably and necessarily, loves himself as the highest Good, and pursues his own Glory as the noblest End. Every necessary and immanent Action that God doth with regard to himself, and many transient Actions towards his Creatures, are perfectly *spontaneous* and *free* with an absolute Liberty of this kind ; and yet perhaps he cannot do otherwise, *i. e.* his Will naturally and eternally and unchangeably determines itself to these Actions ; he freely and necessarily consults himself in all his Designs, and decrees and always acts agreeably to his own Perfections ; he is freely and necessarily just and true to his Creatures.

I know some great Writers distinguish here between a *natural* and a *moral* Necessity, and call all those *Actions* of the Will which are really natural, as well as constant, certain and universal, such as Acts of Truth, and Justice in God, *morally necessary* ; and will allow scarce any thing to be *naturally necessary* but what belongs to Matter, or to the meer *passive* or perceptive Powers of a Spirit : I grant indeed, that the Will, which is influenced by rational Motives, is not under such a sort of

influence in its Actions as Bodies are, because Bodies are mechanically moved; yet the Necessity may be as strong and unalterable: and if it be the very *Nature of God* to act justly and faithfully, so that he cannot Will nor Act otherwise, it may be called (I think) a *Natural Necessity*, since it springs from his *Nature*; as well as it may be called a *Moral* one, because 'tis the Action of an intelligent and free Agent.

Now let us enquire what is a *Liberty of Choice or of Indifference*. Tho' necessary Actions are sometimes said to be *free*, when they are done thus *spontaneously*, as I have described, yet a *Liberty of Choice or Indifference* in things not necessary is the more common sense in which the word *Liberty* is used: This is the second Branch of this fourth distinction, and this implies a *Power to chuse or refuse\**, to chuse one thing or the contrary among several things which are proposed, without any inward or

\* Here note, I do not describe *Liberty of Choice or Indifference*, as many have done, by a *Power to act or not to act*, but a *Power to chuse or refuse*; for there is a great deal of difference between a freedom of willing or chusing, and a freedom of acting what we chuse, as I have shewn before: and much Darkness and Confusion is brought in upon this Subject of Liberty, by not keeping this distinction clear. Perhaps that great Man, Mr. Locke, had writ more perspicuously on this Subject, if he had always maintain'd this Distinction, for he describes *Liberty*, a *Power to act or not to act*, &c.

or outward restraint, force or constraining by ass or influence. So I feel myself at Liberty, and I chuse to stand or walk; I am free, and chuse either to speak or keep silence, to point upward or downward; I chuse one Egg and refuse another out of two that are offer'd. Man is *free* whether he will chuse to honour God his Maker, or dishonour him; to do good to his Neighbour, or do him hurt; to keep himself sober, or to make himself drunk: In all these things he may chuse or refuse which he pleases. This is what the Schools call *Libertas indifferentiae ad opposita*, i. e. a Liberty of Indifference to chuse one thing, or its opposite.

This *Liberty* is utterly inconsistent with all Necessity, whether natural or forcible, *i. e.* with all Necessity of every kind: whatsoever is any way *necessary*, or imposed or constrain'd, cannot in this sense be called *free*. Whensoever the Will is necessarily determin'd to any Act or Object by any thing without or within itself, it has not a *Liberty of Choice or Indifference*; for upon this supposition of its being necessarily determin'd to one thing, it is evident that it could not chuse the contrary.

V. In the last place, Liberty or Freedom of the Will is either *absolute and perfect*, or *imperfect and comparative*.

When

## 10      *Liberty and Necessity*

When we chuse or determine any thing without any manner of Constraint on one side, or Restraint on the other; when we act or determine one way, without any reluctance or any byass toward the contrary side, this is called *absolute and perfect Freedom*: so God chuses to be just and true; so a wise Being chuses to follow the Dictates of Reason wheresoever they appear; so every sensible Being is said to chuse and pursue in general what it calls *Pleasure or Happiness*, tho' sometimes it mistakes wherein Happiness consists, and follows instead of it a Shadow or Mischief.

*Comparative Liberty or Freedom* is when the Mind has some inward reluctance or aversion to those Actions which yet it wills to perform for other more prevailing Reasons; or when it has an inward inclination and desire to do some Action which yet it wills to neglect, being powerfully impell'd by other Considerations: so a Malefactor may be said freely or voluntarily to go to his Execution; for tho' he has an inward aversion to it, yet he chuses it *comparatively*, i. e. rather than to be dragg'd thither by force: so a sick Man is *comparatively free* in chusing to drink a bitter Potion rather than to bear continued Sickness.

Now this sort of Volition in common Speech is sometimes said *not to be free*, because

because the Man doth not absolutely chuse this, but only prefers a less Evil to a greater; and the words, *not free*, in this place signify only a *less degree of Freedom*. Men are ready to conclude in this Case, that because in common speaking the Man was constrain'd, or, as it were, necessitated to go to the Gibbet by a superior Motive, therefore he went *not freely*; tho' indeed it was an Act of Choice, or *comparative Freedom*, i. e. rather than be dragg'd: and by this way of speaking, *viz.* that *he went not freely*, we come also to imagine that Freedom and Necessity are utterly inconsistent things: yet it is plain that tho' here was a sort of *Necessity or Constraint*, yet the Man was *free* and voluntary in his own Act.

'Tis no wonder now that there should be such Contests and Controversies about the Nature of *Liberty*, or the Use of the Word, since it plainly appears that the words *not free* sometimes signify only *less free*; and since the same Action may be said at the same time to be *not free*, i. e. *absolutely*, because we do it with some reluctance, and yet it is said *to be free*, i. e. *comparatively*, because we do it at last voluntarily, and prefer it before something worse.

We may also take occasion to remark, that if such Actions which are not done with a *full Freedom* may be called *comparatively*

paratively free, then there can be no voluntary Acts, or Acts of the Will, but have some natural Freedom also, i. e. at least a comparative Freedom: for the Will cannot act without so much Freedom as this is; and consequently the Will itself cannot be really compelled, but natural Freedom or Liberty will still belong to it in all possible Actions; tho' not a Liberty of *Choice or Indifference*.

After all this Debate, I will readily acknowledge, that some of these Disputes, whether such and such Actions are free or no, are rather Disputes about Words than Things: And if the World would all agree to confine the words *Liberty* and *Freedom*, to signify nothing but a *Freedom of Choice*, a *Liberty of Indifference*, or a *Power to chuse or refuse*, (which is inconsistent with any Necessity of Choice, and which must be allow'd to be the most usual sense of it) I should be so far from disapproving of it, that I think it would be the best way of speaking and writing. And therefore I give notice here, that I shall chiefly use the word *Freedom* in this sense in the following Sections. If we could but always confine every Term to one certain determinate Idea, we should gain and preserve much clearer Ideas of Things; we should make much swifter and larger Advances in Knowledge; we should cut off a thousand occasions of

Mistake, and take away a multitude of Controversies. But when we are inquiring, *What is Liberty or Freedom*, which in the present sense and use of the word among Mankind is apply'd to various Cases, we must not explain the word so as utterly to exclude any *spontaneous Actions*, or *Actions of the Will*, which Men have frequently called *free*, tho' they also may appear necessary, or in some sense constrain'd.

Among other Remarks on this Subject, it is proper also to take notice, that our *judging* concerning the Truth or Falshood, Fitness or Unfitness, Good or Evil of Things, is generally ascribed to that Power of the Soul which is call'd the *Mind* or *Understanding*: and because when we do pass a Judgement, we have no power to judge otherwise than as things appear to the Mind at that time, therefore Judgement is called a *necessary* thing; and indeed Judgement is but an assent or dissent of the Mind, as things appear true or false to the Mind; and on this account it is supposed to have no *freedom* or *liberty* belonging to it. But if we will make a careful Observation of what passes in the transactions of the Soul on these occasions, we shall find that tho' the Mind cannot assent or dissent, cannot judge of things contrary to what they plainly appear, yet the *Will* has a great deal

deal to do in our Judgements concerning Objects proposed to the Mind.

The *Will* is sometimes led by Appetite or Passion, and has an Inclination to chuse a particular Object, and then it wishes that Object to be fit or good : it readily yields to the Prejudices that lie on that side, it fixes the Mind upon those Arguments, which tend to prove what it wishes, and turns the Thoughts away from those Evidences, which lie on the other side of the Question, and does not suffer them to be brought into full View and Comparison ; and thus secretly it influences the Soul to judge the thing it desires to be good or fit, *i. e.* to assent to those Arguments, which are brought to prove its Fitness, keeping the contrary Arguments much out of sight. 'Tis an old *Roman Proverb*, *Quod volumus facile credimus*, *We easily believe that which we wish to be true*: There is indeed a secret Dishonesty and Insincerity in this Conduct, tho' we are not willing to take notice of it.

The *Will* also has power to hasten and precipitate our fixed Assent or Dissent to Propositions in the Mind, and to hurry on the Judgement to determine concerning the Fitness or Goodness of things upon a slight and insufficient View. The Soul of Man is soon tired and weary of Suspense, and the Will hastning to Choice and Action before due Evidence, is really guilty of that rash Judge-

Judgement and rash Action: for the Will has power to withhold the Assent in many Cases, and to delay the Judgement where things do not appear to the Mind with full and bright Evidence, and to set the Mind upon searching further, and viewing the Object again on all sides, before it judges concerning its Truth, Fitness, or Goodness: And by this means the Will may take care that the Soul pass a juster Judgement on things, after a fuller and longer Survey of them. And even where things appear with a pretty good degree of Evidence, the *Will* is able to delay our Assent, and withhold it for a Season; as for instance, If any learned and knowing Friend stand by and warn us of Danger and Mistake, and bid us take heed of assenting too soon, lest we are imposed upon by false Appearances, the Will is able to prolong the Delay of the Judgement, and to withhold it from pronouncing upon the Fitness or Goodness of that Object.

Let it be observed, that I do not alter our common Forms of Speech, nor attribute Judgement to the *Will*, tho' indeed it seems to be some determining Operation of the Soul, consequent to the Appearances of Ideas in the Mind; and therefore 'tis not meerly what some great Writers have represented it, *viz.* *feeling what we feel, or hearing what we hear;* for we can suspend and delay our Assent or Judgement, even when

when a good degree of Evidence appears to the Mind ; and we are also led to give a stronger or weaker Assent, according to the Inclinations of the Will, or Desires of the Heart, neither of which can be properly said with regard to *feeling* or *hearing*.

I say again, I will not call *judging* an Act of Choice or voluntary Operation ; and yet there is so much of this kind of Operation in the Soul exerted about its passing a Judgment on things, that I think we must agree that the Will has a great deal to do in it : and therefore the Errors, derived from these wilful rash Judgements, have something criminal in them, as well as they lead us into further criminal Actions. And were not this the true Account of things, I cannot see how *Faith* or *Unbelief* of the Gospel could have any thing in them worthy either of Praise or Blame : But this is only a hint by the way.

Mr. *Locke* in his *Essay*, Book 2. Chap. 21. Sect. 47. after some other Representations of *human Liberty*, which seem not to be perfectly just, represents it to consist much in a Power of delaying the Execution of our Desires, or suspending the Acts of Volition or Choice, until the Man has diligently examined on all sides what is best : Now this no doubt is a very great part of human Liberty ; and *Des Cartes* the French Philosopher, with good appearance of Reason, makes

makes this Power of suspending the Acts of the Soul to extend to our *Affent to Truth*, as well as to the *Pursuit of Good*; and therefore he proceeds so far, as to make Judgement rather to belong to the Will, and to be justly laudable or blame-worthy. Mr. *Locke* seems also to come pretty near to the Opinion which I have proposed, as appears in the Prosecution of this Discourse about our *Judgements of Good and Evil*, and our Choice and Practice consequent thereon; on which Subject he has many excellent Thoughts in Morality.

---

## S E C T. II.

### *What determines the Will to chuse or act.*

LET us now consider the *Human Will* in the common sense of it, as that Power of the Soul whereby we chuse or refuse what is proposed to the Mind. The usual Principles which are supposed by Philosophers to be Causes of the Determination of the Will to act, in chusing one thing or in refusing another, are chiefly these three, viz. *The greatest apparent Good* as it is discover'd to the Mind, or the *last Dictate of the Understanding*, or the

C Re-

*Removal of some Uneasiness.* Let us consider these three particularly.

*First, the greatest apparent Good.* This does not properly mean *moral Good* or Virtue, but *natural Good*, or that which most conduces to our Ease, Pleasure or Happiness. Now this *greatest apparent natural Good* as it is discover'd to the Understanding, and consider'd as the Cause which certainly influences and determines the Will, doth not differ really from the *last Assent or Dictate of the Understanding* \* consider'd in this same View of Influence: for it is the last Assent of the Understanding concerning the apparent Goodness of a Thing which is supposed to determine the Will to chuse it, and therefore these two are really but one thing under different names or appearances; and as such I shall consider them.

Now among other Evidences or Proofs that the *greatest apparent Good* does not always determine the Will to chuse or act, I shall mention but these two.

1. If the greatest apparent Good always and necessarily determines the Will, then the Will is never free with a *Liberty of Choice or Indifference*; for things placed in

\* The *last Assent* of the Understanding perhaps is a better Term, because the *last Dictate* seems to denote too much of Action, whereas the Understanding is represented properly as a passive Power.

in such a certain View, or seen in such a certain Light, will necessarily appear to the Understanding in such a particular manner, *viz.* as fit or unfit, as Good or Evil, as a greater or lesser Good ; and consequently such appearances to the Understanding, will (according to this Hypothesis) necessarily determine the Will to chuse this greatest appearing Good. And this is the very Scheme of the *Fatalists*, whereby they prove all Human Actions to be necessary, and that there is no such thing as *Freedom of Choice* in any intelligent Being whatsoever : And according to this Hypothesis, it will not be easy to give a fair and satisfactory Answer to the Arguments which the *Fatalists* bring against all our Notions of Moral Good and Evil, if all human Actions are in this manner necessary : But of this more hereafter.

2. The greatest apparent Good does not always determine the Will ; for there are many Persons convinced that future Happiness pursued in a way of Piety and Virtue, is really the greatest *natural* Good : this appears very plain to their *Understanding*, and yet their *Will* chuses present Sensualities and vicious Pleasures, and pursues them in opposition to this greatest apparent Good, and the last Dictate of their Understanding about it. The Power of the Will to chuse and act in this case continues the same after the last Dictate of the Understanding as it

did before; and in weak and foolish Creatures, the Will sometimes exerts this Power by acting and chusing contrary to it.

Some indeed will say, that in this Case the Mind or Understanding being influenced and blinded by sensual Appetite, makes a rash Judgement, and then the Understanding finally dictates, that for this present moment *vicious Pleasure is the greatest Good, and is to be preferr'd*; and so the Will pursues it.

But I rather think 'tis the violence of Appetite or Passion that many times overpasses and inclines the Will strongly, yet not necessarily, to follow vicious Pleasure; and this it does without changing the Dictate of the Understanding, or Convictions of the Mind about the greatest apparent Good, but rather overpowering them by present influences; according to the old Poet, *Video Meliora proboque, Deteriora sequor.* Ask the vicious Man, when he wills and chuses to pursue his Lusts contrary to the Convictions of his Mind and Conscience, whether his Conscience be not still convinced that it is better to pursue Virtue, i. e. not only *morally better*, or more agreeable to the Will of God, but 'tis *naturally better* as it conduces to a greater *natural Good*, or final Happiness: and he will frequently confess it, that consider'd as a *natural Good*, the practice of Virtue, with all its Consequences of future final

final Happiness, is better than Vice with its Consequences of final Misery: But his strong Passions and present Appetites hurry on his Will to chuse Vice before Virtue, and thus contradict the Dictates of the Understanding or Conscience concerning the greatest apparent Good, both Natural and Moral. Mr. *Locke*, in his *Essay*, Book 2. Chap. 21. Sect. 35, 38, 43, 44: talks more copiously on this Subject, and confirms what I have here express'd.

And let it be consider'd, that if things be not as I have here represented them, but if on the contrary, the Will cannot chuse Vice unless the last Dictate of the Understanding determine *that Vice is at present: the greatest apparent Good, or Vice is to be preferred and pursued*, and if then the Will must obey the Understanding, and chuse sensual Vices; then there is no such thing as Sin against the Convictions of the Mind, or the last Dictates of the Understanding: which is a very absurd Proposition, and contrary to all Experience; and it frees the Criminal from all blame even in the sight of God, who has formed his Nature and his Powers in this connexion.

My *last* Reason to prove that the last Dictate of the Understanding, or the greatest apparent Good, does not always determine the Will, is, because sometimes two things

are proposed to the Will, wherein the Understanding can give no Dictate, because it sees no manner of difference, or at least no superior Fitness, nor can possibly represent one as a greater Good than another; and here the Will cannot be determined by the Understanding. Of this I shall say more afterward.

Other Philosophers, and particularly Mr. *Locke* supposes *Uneasiness* to be the great Principle of all the Determinations of the Will. See his *Essay*, Book 2. Chap. 21. Sect. 29, 33—39. But I think it may be proved that the Will is not always determined by some *Uneasiness*, as I shall shew immediately: yet by the way I may take notice, that wheresoever Uneasiness doth determine the Will, this does very little differ from the former Principle, viz. that 'tis determined by the *greatest apparent Good*; for this *Uneasiness* proceeds, as Mr. *Locke* confesses, from the Absence of some natural Good; and the Will determines itself to pursue this absent Good, in order to remove this Uneasiness. Thus 'tis *Good* apprehended by the Mind in its last Dictates that in these Cases still determines and directs the Will.

Or thus: The removal of this present Uneasiness is itself the greatest apparent Good, and the Will is determined to act thus or thus for the removal of this present  
Un-

Uneasiness; and thus 'tis determined by the greatest apparent Good.

In the 33d and 42d Section, Mr. *Locke* himself grants, that 'tis *Good that determines the Will, tho' not immediately*; and his Doctrine is, that Good, as it is apt to produce Ease and Pleasure in us, is the Object of our Desire; and 'tis this Desire of Good raised by the present Uneasiness in the want of it that determines the Will. Now I see no great difference betwixt this and the common Opinion, nor ground enough for that great opposition between his Doctrine in this point, and the common Doctrine, which he seems to represent in two whole Sections; for in the Acts of the Mind which are instantaneous, and many, as it were, are sometimes crowded into a Moment, such as an *Uneasiness under the Absence of Good*, and a *Desire of its Presence*, &c. 'tis difficult to say, this or that is first or last.

Mr. *Lee*, in his Notes on Mr. *Locke*, gives some probable Arguments against his Opinion, and proves that *Uneasiness* is not the sole Motive to voluntary Actions.

This *Uneasiness*, saith he, is a Trouble, a kind of Pain, a natural Evil, and seems rather to be the Spring of animal Actions and of vicious Acts, than of such as are Exercises of Virtue, and Piety, and Charity; and thus 'tis rather the Motive to the Wills of the

worst or meanest of Men, than to noble and virtuous Spirits. So the Fear of Evil is the Motive to the vilest of Men to various Actions and Abstinences; but Love to do as well as receive Good, moves the best-constituted Minds.

This Doctrine of *Uneasiness* seems to govern the Actions of Men by the Principle of Brutes, for they are carried by Hunger and Thirst and *Uneasiness* towards their natural Actions: therefore 'tis more honourable and safe to ascribe at least all virtuous Actions to a diviner Principle.

To this, let me add another Reason or two, to make it more evident that this *Uneasiness* can never be the universal and constant Cause of determining the Will.

Suppose a Man is pleased, and easy, and perfectly satisfied in his present Circumstances, be it in his present Habitation, in his Company, in his Manner of Life, in his Trade and Business, or any thing else; I would ask, What is it determines him to will his continuance in these Circumstances, his abiding in the same Habitation, his conversing with the same Company, &c? Is it any *Uneasiness* that determines him? Is it not rather his present Ease and Sense of Pleasure that moves him to will the continuance of his present Ease? And Mr. *Locke* confesses this in Sect. 34. Now I would ask whether a *Will to continue*  
be

be not a Volition, as well as a *Will to change.*

Again, Is it Uneasiness that determines the Blessed God, and all the holy and happy Spirits in Heaven, to do what they do? Would it not have a profane Sound to say, that present Uneasiness determin'd God to make Beasts and Men, Birds and Flowers, to create a Heaven and an Earth? Can we believe that present Uneasiness determines every Angel to chuse and love God the chief Good, or to will the several Actions wherein he obeys his Maker, and executes his Orders? Or that 'tis some present Uneasiness that causes the Saints in Heaven to perform their several Acts of Duty and Adoration, or to will their continuance in the Service and Enjoyment of God?

Upon the whole, it is granted that these three Principles, *viz.* The greatest apparent Good, the last Dictate of the Understanding, or the Removal of present Uneasiness, (whether you suppose them distinct or the same) may have a persuasive Influence so far as to determine, or rather incline the Will of Men to far the greatest part of their Volitions or Acts of Choice: But we have proved that these are not the universal and certain or necessary Principles of all the Will's Determinations.

Let us enquire now whether there are not many Instances wherein the Will is deter-

determined neither by present Uneasiness, nor by the greatest apparent Good, nor by the *last Dictate of the Understanding*, nor by any thing else, but merely by itself as a sovereign and self-determining Power of the Soul: Or whether the Soul does not will this or that Action in some Cases, not by any other influence but *because it will*, and perhaps to shew its own Sovereignty or *self-determining Power*. Let us put this Case: Suppose I have a mind to prove to an Atheist or a Fatalist that *I am a free Being*, for I can turn my Face to the *South* or the *North*, I can point with my Finger *upward* or *downward*, just as I please, and according as my Soul wills; and that I have a Power to will and chuse which of these Motions I shall perform: Now if to demonstrate this Freedom, I determine to move my Finger *upward*, or turn my Face to the *North*, 'tis not because I was under any present Uneasiness by standing still without Motion; nor was the pointing *upward* or the looking *Northward* a greater apparent Good than looking to the *South* or pointing *downward*: Nor could my *Understanding dictate* one rather than the other: but it was a mere arbitrary Volition, to shew that I have within me this self-determining Power. And thus in some Cases the Will determines its own Actions in a very sovereign Manner because it will, and

and without a Reason borrow'd from the Understanding ; and hereby it discovers its own perfect Power of Choice rising from within itself, and free from all influence or restraint of any kind. And perhaps this may be as good a way to resolve some Difficulties that relate to the Actions of Choice, and *Liberty of the Will, either in God or in Man*, as any other laborious Methods of Solution which have not attain'd the desired Success, nor satisfy'd the inquiring part of Mankind. I will not deny but that I am indebted to Bishop *King* in his Treatise of the *Origin of Evil*, many years ago, for my first Thoughts of this kind : And in my review of these Papers, I am confirm'd in these Sentiments by an *English Translation* of that Book, with ingenious Notes upon it by a Writer who conceals his Name, printed 1731. Tho' I ask leave in some points to differ from the Sentiments in that Treatise.

## S E C T. III.

*The Will is a Self-determining Power.*

**L**E T us see whether this Doctrine of the *Self-determining Power of the Will* may not be formed into a regular Scheme, attended with various *Advantages*, and guarded against the most formidable *Objections*, in the following manner.

*Prop. I.* In every Spirit or Thinking Being, whether perfect or imperfect, finite or infinite, there are two such Principles or Powers as may properly be distinguish'd by our Conceptions, into the *Understanding* and the *Will*.

These are by no means to be conceived as two real Substances or proper distinct Beings; for it is one and the same Spirit that both understands and wills: and yet we have very clear and distinct Ideas of these two Principles or Powers of Agency in ourselves, *viz.* We have a Power of perceiving and assenting to Truth, and of seeing and taking notice of the Fitness or Unfitness, the Goodness or Evil of Things; this is called the *Understanding*, or sometimes the *Mind*: And we have also a

Power of Willing or Chusing one Thing, and refusing another, of preferring one Thing before another, of determining our Choice to one Thing rather than another ; and this is called the *Will*.

As we are evidently and strongly conscious of these Powers in *ourselves*, so we reasonably ascribe the same to *other Spirits*, supposing them to be of a similar Constitution : And we are taught also to form the same Ideas of *GOD* our Maker, whom the Light of Nature and Scripture represent to us as a *Spirit*, and we are made *after his Image*, as well as *are his Offspring*. John iv. 24. Gen. i. 26. Acts xvii. 28.

*Prop. II.* The eternal Reason and Nature of Things seems to point out this *practical Truth* to us, or rather this *Rule of Action*, viz. that where a Being is posseſ'd of two such Powers, one of them, viz. the *Understanding*, which perceives the Fitness or Unfitness, Good or Evil of Things, should be a Director or Guide to the other Power which is active, viz. the *Will*, that it may regulate and determine its Actions, and chuse and refuse Objects proposed to it according to the Fitness or Unfitness, Good or Evil which is discover'd by the *Understanding* : And that wheresoever greater degrees of Fitness or Goodness are discover'd by the *Under-*

Understanding, there also the Will should determine its Choice.

*Prop. III.* But where there is no such superior Fitness or Goodness in Things, or where it cannot be discover'd by the *Understanding*, but the Objects which are proposed appear equally fit or good, there the *Will* is left without a Guide or Director: And therefore it must make its own Choice by its own Determination, it being properly a Self-determining Power. And in such cases the Will does at it were make a *Good* to itself by its own Choice, *i. e.* creates its own Pleasure or Delight in this *self-chosen Good*; even as a Man by seizing upon a Spot of unoccupied Land in an uninhabited Country makes it his own Possession and Property, and as such rejoices in it. Where things were indifferent before, the Will finds nothing to make them more agreeable than they were, consider'd merely in themselves, but the Pleasure it feels arising from its own Choice, and its perseverance therein. We love many things which we have chosen, and purely because we chose them.

Let us survey these two Cases particularly. And, *First*, let us consider the Case where some superior Fitness or Goodness appears to the Understanding.

*Prop. IV.* If the thinking Being or Spirit be wise or perfect, then it will act according

to that eternal *Rule of Action* which rises from Reason and the Nature of Things; that is, whatsoever the Understanding apprehends and judges to have a *greater* or *superior Fitness* or *Goodness* in it, the Will being guided by the Understanding, prefers and determines itself to chuse it, and refuseth the things that appear *less Fit*, as well as those which are *Unfit* or *Evil*. This it doth constantly and certainly, so far as the Being is wise; for this is one chief thing wherein consists the Perfection or Wisdom of a Spirit, *viz.* to chuse and prefer what appears to be *Fit* and *Good* above what is *Unfit* or *Evil*, and also to chuse that which is better or more fit, above that which has less *Fitness*, or *Goodness*.

*Prop. V.* Tho' the Will of intelligent Beings is generally and should be always led or influenced by the greatest *Fitness* and *Goodness* of things wheresoever it appears to the Understanding, yet it is not necessarily and absolutely determined thereby: for the Will of an unwise Being may possibly determine itself without regard to the Understanding, and even contrary to what the Mind judges to be fit or good.

And it may do this many ways, *viz.* by Negligence, by sudden Humour, Caprice, or Wantonness: The Will thro' these Influences may suddenly and rashly prefer *Evil* to *Good*, or that which is less fit to what

what is more fit. Or the Will may be tempted and led away to chuse what is not really Good, by the enticing and solliciting Powers of strong Appetite or Passion, contrary to the Judgement of the Understanding. 'Tis true indeed, the Will may chuse and determine to resist those importunate Passions, or it may obey them without regarding the Mind, or in opposition to the better Dictates of the Understanding: For tho' the *Mind* is given us for a Director or Adviser, yet not as an absolute Lord or Ruler. 'Tis the *Will* that is properly the moral Principle or Agent within us, the proper Subject of Virtue or Vice, and therefore it must be free and a self-determining Power, and must chuse of itself whether it will follow Reason or Appetite, Judgement or Passion.

And therefore 'tis, that whensoever the Will determines contrary to the Dictates of the Understanding or Conscience, 'tis both unwise and highly criminal, because such a Spirit acts directly contrary to the Light or Law of Nature, the *great Rule of Reason*, and the appearing Fitness of things: And this gives just occasion to the sharpest Reproaches and Torments of Conscience, when the Will has determined contrary to the Dictates of Conscience, *i.e.* of the Understanding.

*Prop.*

*Prop. VI.* Tho' Sins against Conscience are too frequently committed, yet the chief Reason why imperfect Beings so often chuse unfit or evil Things, and prefer them to what are fit and good, is not merely from this negligent Humour, or a wanton and capricious Turn of the Will, or the mere compliance with violent Appetite or Passion in determining its Choice contrary to appearing Fitness or Goodness, as represented by the Understanding; but it arises most frequently from the Understanding apprehending some things to be fit or good upon a slight view of them, which really are not so, and from the Will's Inclination or Wish, through the false Byass of Appetite or Passion, that such a thing should be fit and good, before mature Examination, and from its determining to search no further; but it precipitates the Judgement, hurries it into Error, and acts and chuses rashly upon present slight Appearances.

And indeed in this Case the Will, which might yet longer suspend the Judgement by putting the Understanding upon a further search, is criminal in permitting a Judgement to pass on things upon such slight Appearances of Fitness or Goodness, and determining its Choice according to them, instead of delay, and further search and enquiry.

Mankind (of whom I chiefly speak here) are often led astray in this Matter by the false Representations which Passion and Appetite, Sense and Fancy make of things to the Understanding. We commit many Mistakes about the Fitness or Goodness of Things, by seeing them in a deceiving Situation, in a false Light, and under a Disguise, by beholding things but in part and in an imperfect manner, by the numerous Prejudices of many kinds that lead imperfect Creatures astray in their Judgement of things. And we are generally too ready to pass a rash and hasty Judgement and Determination of what is fit and good, before a thorough Examination. We soon grow weary of a State of Suspense and Doubt about the Fitness or Goodness of Things: and there is often found an Impatience in the Will to determine itself one way or another with speed, as well as an Inclination that such a thing should appear fit and good according to the Byass of Sense and Appetite; and thus it often chuses Evil instead of Good.

*Prop. VII.* Indeed, if we happen to pass a false Judgement from the mere Imperfection of our natural Capacities, or under the Influence of any of these Prejudices which we had no manner of Means nor Power to resist or subdue; this Mistake of Judgement, and the unhappy Choice of the Will

Will according to it, seem to be innocent, and merit no blame.

But when we give up ourselves to a rash Determination of Judgement or Choice, under such Prejudices as might be resisted, or when we yield to this Impatience of the Will, and wilfully neglect a further Search where we might have justly delay'd, and searched further, and by this means our Will prefers real Evil to Good, or chuses things less fit before things which are more fit, we herein become culpable: And this Faultiness hath greater or less degrees, according to the different Opportunities, Advantages, and Capacities we had to examine, judge, and chuse aright.

And let it be observ'd, that as unwise Spirits determine amiss in their Judgement and Choice of Things, through haste or rashness, or through a sudden and strong Byass of Appetite or Passion, &c. so a Spirit which is wise may, through Unwatchfulness, suffer itself to be betray'd into such a rash and false Judgement, and such an unhappy and criminal Action, and chuse Evil instead of Good. And perhaps this was the true Spring of the Fall of Man from his State of Innocence, and the Entrance of Sin into the World.

Hitherto we have spoken chiefly concerning the Determination and Choice of the Will in those Cases where the Under-

standing represents one thing as fitter and better than another: But let us now consider the Case supposed in the third Proposition, where there is no such superior Fitness or Goodness, or where it doth not appear to the Understanding.

Prop. VIII. There may be several things proposed to the Understanding even of a wise and knowing, but imperfect, Spirit, wherein the superior Fitness or Unfitness is concealed, and doth not sufficiently appear to the Understanding, so as to give any just and certain Direction to the Will which of them to chuse or refuse. In some Cases it is plain that the Understanding, after all proper surveys and inquiries, is left in perfect suspense about the greater or lesser Fitness of Things, and the Will may be perfectly indifferent to them: And yet the Will may without fault or folly determine itself to chuse the one or the other: as for instance, If I am hungry, and two pieces of Bread, or two Cakes lie before me, which appear to be equally good for Food, at equal distance from me, and in all other circumstances have no discernable inequality, so that I am intirely indifferent to either of them in particular, yet my Will may determine itself to chuse and eat one of them to satisfy my hunger; but which I shall chuse must be determined by the mere Act of my Will, for I cannot stay

stay an hour in suspense and trifling inquiries. Perhaps one of these pieces of Bread might be really in itself much fitter for my Nourishment than the other; or, perhaps there might be secret Poison in the one, and not in the other; but I knew it not; they were equal to me in appearance, and therefore I was not led to determine my Choice by any superior appearance of Fitness or Goodness; yet my Will determined itself to chuse one of them because it is a self-determining Power, and hath perfect freedom of Choice within itself: and herein there is nothing foolish or criminal, even tho' I should happen to be poison'd by it, by taking that piece which was unfit for my nourishment.

*Prop. IX.* As there may be several things proposed to a very wise intelligent Being, wherein *he can discern* no superior Fitness or Goodness, so there may be some things proposed wherein *there is really* no superior Fitness or Goodness at all; yet it may be fit at particular seasons that one of them should be chosen. This is a common Case; As when two Bricks, suppose them called *A* and *B*, lie before a Builder, which are equally fit to fill up such a Vacancy in the Wall, and lie equally near his Hand, and are equal in every other appearing Circumstance; the Builder must not stay an hour to debate with himself, and to deter-

mine which Brick to chuse for filling up this Vacancy ; that would be folly indeed : But his Will freely and of itself chuses the Brick *A*, merely because he will, and leaves *B*, or refuses it : Then, as I hinted before, this Brick *A* becomes so far good and fit by his chusing it, as that he approves of it in its place in the Building above any other, and delights in his own Choice and Work.

Or take another instance : Suppose a Man be desired to shew his Power of Self-determination, or of pointing with his Finger, and he points to the *North* or to the *East*, to the Heavens or to the Earth ; here is no superior Fitness or Unfitness in the one or the other, but he points upward or Northward as he pleases ; his Will determines for no other Reason but because he will, and hereby shews his own self-determining Power in all this ; tho' it be perfectly arbitrary, yet there is nothing foolish or faulty.

We may find instances of this kind in Moral Actions as well as Natural : Suppose God requires *Abraham* to offer a Lamb out of his Flock in Sacrifice, and *Abraham* taking a survey of the twenty fattest Lambs in his Flock, cannot find which is the best of them ; his own Will must finally determine and chuse any one of them for the Altar. Or let it be supposed that I have ten Half-pennies in my Purse, and I meet with a dozen Beggars, all so equally poor and

### Sect. 3. *Self-determining Power.* 39

and miserable, that I cannot discern which is the most or which is the least indigent: I must necessarily leave two of these Men out of my distribution, but my Understanding cannot direct me which these two are, nor can it tell me which are the ten fittest Objects of my Charity. What can determine my Choice here but my own Will by its self-determining Power?

The Understanding in such Instances as these, has no pretence of Power to direct or determine the Will, because it sees no superior Fitness, and the Will would be for ever undetermined, if it did not determine itself.

---

### S E C T. IV.

#### *How the Will of GOD determines itself.*

**N**O W let us try to apply these things to the Great and Blessed GOD in his Counsels and Actions; always remembering, that when we speak of these Divine and Unsearchable Themes, we do not pretend nor assume so much as to determine that things must be literally just so transacted in the Divine Counsels, but that we speak of God as acting according to the manner

of Men, and so far as our Ideas can reach those Sublimities.

*Prop. X.* The great God, whose Understanding is perfect, sees all the real and possible Fitnesses and Unfitnesses, Good or Evil, which are in things, as they are contained in his own eternal Ideas : He beholds all that is fit or unfit, whether the things themselves are actually existent, or only possible, because he sees all the infinite Relations of things to one another in a simultaneous and comprehensive View.

Here note, that I do not meddle with the Debate whether there be any Fitness or Goodness in things antecedent to or abstracted from the Being of a God. Had there not been a God, there had never been such real Fitnesses, nor such Ideas at all. Yet it is certain we may conceive of such Fitnesses antecedently to our Conception of the Being of a God. This is plain and evident, that God is eternal, and his Ideas are eternal, and these Fitnesses of things also are eternal : and perhaps these Fitnesses of Things can have no original Existence nor Eternity but in the Divine Ideas, and consequently are included in the unchangeable Nature of God.

And this is one Argument whereby, as I remember, the late ingenious Mr. Norris somewhere proves the Being of a God, viz. that there are certain eternal Truths  
or

or Propositions, Natural, Mathematical and Moral, such as, *Three and three make six*; *Two Parallel Lines will never meet*; *The Whole is greater than any one of its Parts*; and *God is to be honoured by his intelligent Creatures*. Now these eternal unchangeable Truths are not a mere Nothing, and therefore they must have an eternal Existence somewhere, and this cannot be but in some eternal Mind, which is G O D. However it be, this is certain, that all these eternal Fitnesses lie open to the Divine Mind, and are part of his unchangeable Ideas, which is all that my present Argument requires.

*Prop. XI.* When we consider or speak of the Decrees of God, or his Determinations what he will do, or what he will not do, we are constrained to acknowledge that his Will always chuses and determines to act what is fit and good: that is, in our way of conceiving, wheresoever there is an eternal Fitness or Unfitness, Good or Evil in things, he always determines to act according to this Fitness, and this Goodness; for to act an unfit thing would be unwise, and to act a thing which is evil, would not be good; whereas the blessed God is perfectly Wise and perfectly Good in all his Works and his Decrees, in his Creation and Providence, and Government of the World; he is faithful to his Promises, he  
is

## 42 How the Will of GOD

is righteous and just in his Determinations, he is kind in his Conduct towards his Creatures so far as the Rules of Wisdom and Justice admit: Nor is it possible that God should be or act otherwise than according to this Fitness, where there is any Fitness or Goodness in things, since these eternal and unchangeable Fitnesses exist in his Ideas, and for God to act against them, would be unfit and unwise, and unbecoming the Character and Nature of a God.

*Prop. XII.* For the same reason his Will exerting itself in a way of Government, determines all the Rules of moral Virtue and Piety for the Practice of his Creatures, according to the original and eternal Fitness of things, wheresoever there is such an eternal Fitness. As for instance, that *God our Creator is to be honour'd and lov'd, and worshipped, and obey'd; that Promises and Contracts are to be fulfilled; that one Man must not take away another Man's Life or Property by force or fraud, &c.* All which are Moral Propositions of eternal Truth.

*Prop. XIII.* God has made these Moral Rules known to Man to be his Will two ways, *viz.* by Reason and by Revelation.

1. *By Reason,* that is, by forming their natural Powers of Thinking and Reasoning in such a manner, that when they set themselves to a careful and due Consideration of the

the Relation of God to his Creatures, and of Creatures to one another, they cannot but infer these Propositions to be true, and to be most proper Rules to govern their Practice; and that God, who has formed their reasoning Powers in this manner, has hereby made these things their Duty. As our Reason is so formed, that in natural things it is impossible we should judge otherwise than that *three and three make six, or the Whole is greater than a Part*; so in Moral things we cannot judge otherwise, when we have the Idea of a God, than that *God our Maker is to be honoured and worshipped, &c.* And when our Reason judges thus, then it appears to be the Will of God, and we are obliged to perform and obey it as our Maker's Will.

2. By *Revelation*, or *Scripture*, God has also manifested these Rules of moral Virtue or natural Religion, and thus confirm'd the Law of Nature or Dictates of Reason, and given a double Discovery of these Duties to those who live where this Revelation is published, and a double Obligation to the performance of them.

Here let it be observed, that I enter not into the Controversy, Whether these moral Propositions about eternal Fitnesses of things would have the force of Laws, and carry any proper Obligation with them upon the Mind and Will of Man without the Consideration

## 44 *How the Will of GOD*

deration of the Existence of God, and of his Will thus found out by our reasoning Powers. I am rather inclined to think that it is the Will of God as manifested by Reason or Revelation, which lays the true and proper moral Obligation on the practice of intelligent Creatures ; but I avoid the embarrassing my present Scheme of Thoughts with that Dispute. 'Tis evident enough, that in the grand Lines of moral Virtue and Piety there are these eternal Fitnesses ; and our reasoning Powers, when they have found out the Being of a God, and our Relation to him, must also acknowledge they are so far the Will of God, that we are obliged to practise according to these moral Fitnesses, these eternal Rules of Virtue.

*Prop. XIV.* But there may be several things supposed to come within the view of the Divine Mind, or the Understanding of God, consider'd as a *Creator*, which have no real Fitness or Goodness in themselves, or at least which have all an equal Fitness or equal Goodness to answer any general or special Design of God : And if they are consider'd in all the various Relations in which they stand either to God himself, or to other things in the Universe, there is no real superior Fitness or Goodness in any of them above the rest, so that they appear perfectly indifferent in the Divine Ideas.

Now,

Now in such Instances the Will of God, as a sovereign Agent, has no Determination from his own Ideas, and therefore in and of itself determines itself to chuse one thing and not another ; and, as it were, makes that thing *Good*, makes it pleasing to himself, by his own Determination or Choice of it. Wheresoever the infinite Knowledge of God sees no Goodness nor Evil in the Ideas of things themselves, he can make them so far good by fixing his own Free-will and Choice upon them, and they then are agreeable and pleasing because of his free Choice, which before were entirely indifferent.

And indeed there seem to be a great number of instances of this kind relating to God and his Works : as, What sort of System of Beings he would make, and whether Minds, Bodies, or both ; What should be the precise Shape, and what the precise Place of every corporeal Being in the World ; Whether this whole Universe, or the Sun in our System, should have one Atom in it more or less ; Whether the Whole or any Part of it should have been created one moment sooner or later ; In what precise Spot of our solar World *Jupiter* or *Saturn*, or any of their *Satellites*, or this *Earth* or its *Moon* should be first placed ; or whether any of them should have one Particle of Matter more or less in them, or this

this or that Particle lie in any other situation ; Whether this single Atom of Mould or Clay should be part of the Glebe at *Taunton* or *Tiverton*, or whether this Grain of Sand or Pebble should be found on the Shore of *Deal* or *Dover*, or on the Coasts of *Africa* or the *East-Indies* ; \* Whether this Particle of Water should belong to the *Severn* or the *Thames*, or should be flowing this Moment in the *Atlantick* or the *Mediterranean* Sea ; or whether this Particle of Air should be found in *Essex* or *Hertfordshire*, or in *America* on this Day, this Hour, and this Second of Time : On what particular Branch such a Bird should sit at such a Minute, and what Notes it should sing ; and how many Leaves should grow on such a Bough, and how many Indentings on the Edge of every Leaf ; How many Colours should glow on the Cheek of such a Tulip, or yellow Seeds lie in the bosom of a Rose ; Whether this particular Human Soul should be united to a Body born in *Lapland* or *Russia*, or this Child should be created for a tall Stature or a Dwarf, or be brought into

---

\* I have dwelt too long perhaps on such minute and inconsiderable Instances as these ; but I did it partly to intimate how universally the Great God is laid under necessary and minute Limitations, if these things were not indifferent ; and partly to give occasion to diffuse our Thoughts into like Instances in the Animate, Human, and Angelick Worlds, which perhaps are as little and indifferent in the Esteem of God, as these minute Inconsiderables are in our Esteem.

into the World in the seventh or seventeenth Century ; Whether this Drop of Rain should fall upon a plow'd Field or a Rock, or this bright Sun-beam should light on me or my Neighbour, on the Earth or the Moon : And perhaps ten thousand other things, and that of much greater importance in their Consequences, may have no superior Fitness or Unfitness in themselves, but are all equal and all indifferent. And here the Will of God, by and of itself, as a free and sovereign Power, determines itself in its Choice, and as it were makes it fit and *good* by his own Choice and Determination, and delights in his own Will and Purpose, and in the correspondent Works of his Hands.

*Prop. XV.* When God out of mere Sovereignty and Good Pleasure hath determined his Will to chuse and create one sort of World or System of Things out of Thousands which perhaps were equally fit, or to make this or that sort of Creatures in this World ; he then may be said to be led by the Nature and Relations of those things, and by proper Fitnesses which belong to that System, or to those Creatures, to determine those things of a natural or moral kind, which are proper for those Creatures, or for that System. As for instance : Supposing just such a World to be created as ours is, then perhaps it must have such Laws

of Motion : Or, if Man be created exactly such a Being as he is, then it is proper that he should have such Ideas, such Notions and Sentiments, &c. and that he should live under such certain Laws and Rules of Action.

But perhaps several of these are not eternal Laws or Rules either of Nature, or Motion, or Morality to other sorts of Creatures, or other Systems which God might have chosen to create. Therefore tho' we may assert *some* to be eternal Laws or Rules for all possible Worlds, yet 'tis hard for us to say in *all* Cases, how far these eternal Fitnesses extend. And we have reason enough to suppose that many things even in our present System of Nature are not determined from their eternal superior Fitness, but that thousands of Possibles even in our System might be equally fit in themselves, and 'twas the Will of God the Creator, that sovereignly chose some particulars above others, and made them actually exist, and behold they are *all very good*.

*Prop. XVI.* So when we consider God as a *Governor* in appointing such *positive Laws* and Rules of Duty for his Creatures, which are not contain'd in the *Law of Nature*, there may be Instances wherein among a thousand possible Rules or Laws each of them may be fit, and yet there is no superior Fitness in one above the rest : Then  
the

the Will of God by and of itself determines and chuses what positive Laws, what Duties he will command or prescribe to his Creatures, and he makes the thing which he prescribes more fit and good for us to practise merely by his own Choice, Determination, and Command: as whether the Tabernacle should have just such a number of Boards or Curtains, Pins or Tacks in it; whether every Board or every Curtain should be just so long and so broad, to the thousandth part of an Inch; whether the Sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, the Red Heifer, and the whole Burnt-Offering on the great Day of Atonement, should have every the least Ceremony of Washings, Burnings, Sprinklings, &c. belonging to them, so precisely adjusted in that very form as they are appointed in the Books of *Moses*; in short, whether every Point and Tittle of every Ceremony and positive Duty which God has appointed from the Beginning of the World to this day, had in itself and in the Nature of Things, such a superior Fitness, that it could not be determined otherwise: Surely it is much more becoming and proper to think and say, that God has determined these things by his own Will or Self-determining Power and free Choice: For it seems to me a very harsh and bold Affirmation, that not one of all these Punctilio's could ever have been otherwise

appointed by God himself, as we shall take notice immediately.

*Prop. XVII.* Thus whether we consider **Man** as a natural or a moral Agent, and whether we consider **God** either as a Creator or as a Governor, there seem to be several instances wherein there is no superior Fitness or Unfitness of Things, that appears to the Understanding to give any direction to the Will in its Choice: And as the Nature of the Will in itself is a Power of Choice or Self-determination; so in these instances it eminently appears that it must be left to determine and chuse for itself without any direction of the Understanding.

---

## S E C T. V.

### *The Advantages of this Scheme of Liberty.*

**T**HIS Scheme of the Liberty of the Will, and of the Spring of its Choice and Determination, as residing within itself, has many Advantages attending it; and they are such as these.

I. *Advantage.* We are hereby led evidently to a *Self-moving Power*, to a *Principle of Motion or proper Action* in Man, which we are conscious of continually, and which

which we feel and experience in ourselves to be the active Spring of those voluntary Motions which we excite in our own Bodies, and thereby in the Bodies that are round about us: And this leads us by fair reasoning to infer, that since we neither did nor could give Being to ourselves, to our self-moving Powers, or to other Creatures, there must be some such *supreme self-moving Power* which is the Author and Creator both of Bodies and Spirits, i.e. of all Active and Passive Beings.

Whereas the contrary Opinion, which supposes the Will to be always necessarily determined by the Understanding, and the Understanding always determined by the Appearances of Things, gives us no discovery of any *self-moving Principle or Power* in this World; and while the same Opinion supposes the Will of God to be in the same manner universally, eternally and unalterably moved and determined by the Appearances of Things and their superior Fitness, it gives perhaps too much advantage to the Atheist and the Sceptic to doubt whether there be any *self-moving Power* at all or no, whether there be any first-moving Spirit, i.e. a God. This Doctrine has in fact been employ'd to this wretched purpose.

II. *Advantage.* This Opinion asserts and attributes the most proper and most rational

Doctrine of full Freedom to every intelligent Creature, and conveys a clear Idea of their Liberty both in those spontaneous Actions where the Fitness of things so fully and evidently appears, as powerfully to persuade the Will, as well as in all other Actions where the Fitness doth not appear with such full Evidence and Power, or finally in those things where there is no superior Fitness at all appearing. Every Action determined by the Will of Man is free, because the Will is a *self-determining Power*.

Whereas in the other Scheme, which supposes that the Will of Man in every Action whatsoever is certainly and necessarily determined by the last Dictate or Judgement of the Understanding, and that the Understanding is necessarily determined in its Judgement by present appearances of things as to their Fitness or Unfitness, there is really no perfect *Liberty of Indifference* or *Liberty of Choice* left to Man, or to any intelligent Being in any Action: but all is necessary with a natural Necessity, all is Fate; for nothing can be otherwise than it is: And this Opinion has given an unhappy Occasion to the Principles of Fatalists in all Ages.

III. *Advantage.* This Scheme of things supposes the Truth of what we daily find in common Life, that there are many Objects and Actions which are equal or indifferent to us, and which have no appearing superior

superior Fitness or Goodness in them; and yet it gives us leave to enjoy the pleasure of any of these indifferent Objects or Actions by the free Choice and self-determining Power of the Will. Whereas if the Will must always be determined in its Choice by some superior appearing Goodness or Fitness, we could never come to enjoy any of the Satisfactions that may arise from these equal and indifferent Actions or Objects, because we should be held in everlasting suspense between them, as the *Ass's* in the Problem *between two like and equal Thistles*, and never be able to taste one of them, having nothing that could determine our Choice.

IV. *Advantage.* This Doctrine of the self-determining Power of the Will sets the *Nature and Distinction of Virtue and Vice* in this present State in the truest Light, together with the rewardable or punishable Properties thereof: This shews how acceptable to God are the good Actions of Men, as being the Effects of Free Choice; the Will having a free and self-determining Power of its own Choice, even after things are represented to the Understanding in their Fitness or Unfitness, in their good or evil Appearances: And at the same time it lays the fault of every criminal Action only upon the Creature, by allowing the Will to have a free Power either to determine sud-

denly and rashly, and precipitate the Judgement concerning the Fitness of Things, or to suspend the Judgement of the Understanding in opposition to any slight appearances of Fitness or Goodness, and to search yet further, and wait for further Evidence, as well as by ascribing to the Will a free Power to determine itself either to chuse or to refuse after any Representations of Good or Evil, Fitness or Unfitness made by the Understanding. This Doctrine sets Vice and Virtue in their true Natures, their Merit or Demerit, and represents them as suited to their different Rewards.

Whereas the other Scheme which determines the Will always and certainly by the Understanding, and the Understanding by the situation and appearance of things, seems to take away the true Nature and Distinction of Vice and Virtue; for the sublimest Virtues and the vilest of Vices seem rather to be Matters of Fate and Necessity, flowing naturally and necessarily from the Existence, the Circumstances, and present Situation of Persons and Things: For this Existence and Situation necessarily makes such an appearance to the Mind; from this appearance flows a necessary Perception and Judgement concerning these things; this Judgement necessarily determines the Will; and thus by this Chain of necessary Causes *Virtue* and *Vice* would lose their

their Nature, and become *natural Ideas* and necessary Things, instead of *moral* and free Actions: and thus there would be nothing really rewardable in the one, or blameable and punishable in the other. This also the *Atheists* and the *Fatalists* have form'd into so strong an Argument, as 'tis very difficult to give a fair Answer to them, if we suppose the Will to be necessarily determined in every Act by the Ideas and Assent of the Understanding.

To confirm this Notion of *Virtue and Vice proceeding from the self-determining Power of the Will*; let us consider, that all Mankind naturally and constantly suppose the Determinations of their Will to be *their own Actions*, whether they be Good or Evil: For however they might, from a Principle of Pride and Vanity, assume the honour of *good Actions* to themselves, tho' they were not intirely their own, yet they would not impute *evil Actions* to themselves, if they did not feel themselves to be the proper Cause of them by the free Determinations of their own Will. The Soul or Conscience of Man charges him with acting amiss, when *his Will has chosen* that which is Evil, and brought Misery upon himself; and hence arise sharp and bitter inward Reflections, and Sorrows of another kind than those which proceed from mere Calamities which were necessary,

sary, and which he could not avoid. Nor can we suppose the God of Nature would have placed such a Principle in Mankind, as should naturally excite him to bitter Anguish and Self-accusation for Actions which were naturally necessary, being determined to them necessarily by his Perceptions, and in which his Will had no self-determining Power or Choice.

V. *Advantage.* This Doctrine of the self-determining Power of the Will, shews us *a wise and good Man* in his true Character, *viz.* whose Will, tho' it be a self-determining Power, and can chuse contrary to the Understanding, and can obey the Influences of Appetite and sinful Passion, yet it suffers itself to be directed, and as it were determined by the Fitness or Unfitness of things, as they are represented by the Understanding after a due examination and survey, wheresoever this Fitness or Unfitness appears. And in this Conduct he imitates the Blessed God, who never acts contrary to these appearances of Fitness and Unfitness, never determines any thing contrary to the eternal Reasons and Relations of things as contain'd in his own Ideas, but always chuses and acts in conformity to them.

VI. *Advantage.* This gives us the clearest, the easiest, and the most unexceptionable Account how Sin came first into the World.

Man

Man in Paradise was wise and innocent, but imperfect and in a State of Trial. Sense, or Appetite, or Passion, or all these together, join'd with the Devil in the Serpent to make a false Representation of things to his Understanding, without giving him sufficient Evidence to have determined his Judgement on their side, and influenced his Choice: Then his Will, which ought to have suspended his Judgement till he had made further search and enquiry, did in some heedless and unwatchful Moment, rashly suffer the Soul to assent to Falshood, and as rashly and hastily follow'd these false Representations, and determined its Choice to Evil instead of Good.

Or we may suppose, that the Will being tempted and inticed strongly by Appetite or Passion, both by an inordinate sensual Appetite to the forbidden Fruit, an inordinate Desire of Knowledge and Ambition of being as a God, determined itself rashly, without due delay and enquiry, to obey and comply with the strong Byass of present Appetite and Passion, without waiting for a mature Dictate of the Understanding; and thus Man chose what was Evil, and disobey'd his Maker: And herein Man appeared highly criminal in his first Sin, and the fault must be laid entirely upon himself, because it was a free Act of his Will, which was a self-determining Power. And indeed

deed there is no such thing as actual *Sin*, properly speaking, but in free Acts of the Will.

Whereas if we suppose the Understanding to be necessarily determined to judge according to the Appearances of things, and the Will necessarily to follow the Judgement of the Understanding; then the blame will be ready to be cast on the Providence of God which placed *Adam* in such Circumstances, as that such false Representations should be made to his Understanding which he could not avoid, and which would necessarily determine his Judgement, and consequently his Choice of Evil, and his Disobedience to his Maker.

I will not assume so much as to pretend this is the only way whereby we can account for Sin's coming into the World, and making its first entrance into the innocent Heart of the first Man; but I think this gives as fair and easy a Solution of it, as any that I have found.

VII. *Advantage.* This Doctrine shews us the *Excellency and Rewardableness of Faith* in the Gospel of *Christ*, and the *criminal Nature of Unbelief*. When the Christian Revelation is proposed to Man as coming from God, it becomes Man as a rational Creature to consider the Proofs and Evidences brought to confirm it, the Prophecies, the Miracles, the internal Excellencies,

## Sect. 5. this Scheme of Liberty. 59

lencies, and all external Testimonies that come with it : And it is the *Will* which must employ and determine the *Mind* to dwell upon these Enquiries diligently and faithfully, in proportion to the Merits of the Cause, to keep the Heart sincere and unbiass'd in the enquiry, to attend carefully to every Gleam of Light, and every Argument, and to suffer itself to be convinced, at last, by the preponderating Weight of Reasoning, laying aside every Prejudice of Flesh and Mind, of Appetite and Passion, of Pride and Self-sufficiency, of Antiquity and Novelty, of Education and Company, &c. and not to pass a Judgement without such Evidence as appears to be just and sufficient. This is a Work of Self-denial and Sincerity, Diligence and Labour, to keep the Mind in a wise suspense till Arguments appear convincing, and then to yield up all its former Mistakes and Prejudices to this Conviction. This is truly rewardable in the sight of God. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

On the other hand, 'tis the *Will of Man* which hath the chief hand in *Infidelity* : It is the Will that indulges Prejudices against the Gospel, it refuses to apply and hold the Mind close to a diligent and faithful Survey of it with all its Evidences ; or it wisheth the Gospel may not be true, because it restrains its Appetites or evil Inclinations ; or

it determines against it rashly upon slight and insufficient Grounds; it indulges an Aversion to it without reason, and thereby becomes culpable, and is justly punishable.  
*He that believeth not, shall be damned.*

Whereas the contrary Opinion, which makes Faith or Unbelief, Assent or Dissent to the Gospel, and Acceptance or Rejection of it, to be the necessary Effect of present appearances of things to the Understanding, and supposes things necessarily to appear according to the Circumstances and Situation in which they are placed, without interesting the *Free-Will* and *Choice* of Man at all in the matter of Faith or Unbelief; this Opinion, I say, goes a great way toward the excusing of *Infidelity* as innocent, and taking away the virtuous Character and Rewardableness of *Faith* in the Gospel.

VIII. *Advantage.* This Doctrine of the self-determining Power of the Will allows the blessed God *a full Freedom of Choice in distributing his Favours* to which of his Creatures he pleases, and in what degrees. It lays a just Foundation of Praise and Thankfulness for all the free Actions of his Goodness and Kindness to his Creatures, according to those degrees of Mercy and Bounty which he distributes among them; because he is not obliged to all those particular Actions or Objects by a necessary and superior Fitness, since he might have chosen

chosen to manifest equal Goodness to other Creatures in other ways and manners, and which might have been equally fit and proper : as for instance, God might have brought forth the Soul of an *American Savage* in the *British Islands*, surrounded with Light and Knowledge ; or have produced me among the Savages in *America* in gross Darkness, as well as in *Great Britain*, a Land of Light. My Soul might have been united to a Body born of *African Idolaters* ; he might have made me Blind and a Cripple, as well as given me Health and Eye-sight ; I might have had the Brain of an Ideot, and been bred up without Knowledge, as well as enjoy'd my share of intellectual Powers and Advantages of Learning ; he might have formed me the Child of a Beggar, made me an Heir to Filth and Wretchedness, and train'd me up to ask my Bread from Door to Door, instead of the comfortable Circumstances which I enjoy, and the Parents from whence I came. We cannot but suppose it possible for the great God to have found a way to have made these things comport with his grand Scheme and Counsels in the Universe, if he had so pleased ; but he has chosen and determined better things for me from his own Free-will and sovereign Goodness, and blessed be his Name.

*IX. Advantage.* This Doctrine manifests and maintains the just distinction between *the Moral and Positive Commands of God*, while we suppose his *Moral Commands* and Prohibitions to be drawn from the eternal Fitness or Unfitness of Things ; whereas his *Positive Commands* and Prohibitions are for the most part, if not entirely, the free and arbitrary Determinations of his Will and Choice.

I do not call them *Arbitrary*, as tho' God had no reason at all for appointing them, or that they are not suited to attain very happy and divine Purposes in the grand Scheme of his Counsels ; but they are *Arbitrary* in this respect, that he might have chosen and appointed other positive Commands or Prohibitions, which might have been equally fit, and have attain'd Purposes as happy and glorious, and which he might have introduced with equal reason : For it is very hard to suppose, as I hinted above, that every Punctilio and all the little Circumstances of every positive Command and Prohibition of God throughout all the Ages of his Church, *Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian*, were determined by the necessary superior Fitness of them. I shall enquire immediately, Whether any thing more than this can be said concerning his *Moral Commands* ; and then, What difference is there between the one and the other ?

X. *Advantage.* This Sheme of the self-determining Power of the Will represents the Doctrine of the *Freedom of Man's Will*, and the *Power and Prevalence of Divine Grace in a most happy harmony and consistency*, perhaps beyond what any other Scheme can represent. Suppose God decree and determine to convert such a Sinner as *Onesimus* to Faith and Holiness: he can represent to his Understanding, by his own Word, and by the additional Operation of his own Spirit, the Fitness and Goodness of Faith in *Chrift*, and true Repentance, in such a superior Light, as he, who knows the Hearts and Sentiments and Situation of all Men, doth certainly foreknow will be not only *sufficient* but *effectual* to influence the Will of *Onesimus* to comply with it: And yet God need not Mechanically or Physically, Necessarily or Irresistibly move and constrain the Will of the Creature to comply: And tho' the Will is left to its own free Agency and self-determining Power, yet the Light in which God sets the Gospel before the Eyes of the Mind is so great, as will finally and certainly persuade the Will, tho' not necessarily impel or constrain it. And the great God, who knows intimately the Make and Constitution of our Natures, and our present Situation, sees clearly that this Light will be finally effectual to influence the Will

## 64 *The Advantages of this Scheme.*

Will freely to comply with the Proposals  
of Grace.

Thus the virtuous and pious Actions of Men are praise-worthy and rewardable, and approve themselves to their own Consciences as well as to God, the righteous Governor and Judge; because the Will had a natural self-determining Power to chuse the contrary. And yet these good Actions may be effectually secured as to their performance, by such a powerful Representation of Divine Things to the Understanding, as God foreknows will certainly, tho' not necessarily, be an occasion of the final determination of the Will to Piety and Virtue; and thus the Free Favour or Grace of God stands entitled to its due and divine Honours.

'Tis the Opinion of a considerable Writer on this Subject, that herein lies a great deal of the Pleasure of a self-approving Conscience in this our World, that the good Man had a Power to chuse an evil Object or Action, but he actually refused it, and chose the good. And herein God, as a Judge and Rewarder, shews his Equity, in giving Happiness to the Man of Virtue. Whereas if the Divine Power Physically and Irresistibly move and determine the Will to chuse what is good, this would make the divine Illumination of the Mind needless, since the Will might then chuse Virtue without it. This (say some) would do

violence to Nature, would quite invert the Method of treating free Agents; and many other evil Consequences are reckon'd up by some Authors. Now I would only enquire whether all these are not avoided by supposing the Influence of the Grace of God upon the Soul of Man to be illuminative and suasive, and yet finally efficacious and certain; which Efficacy and Certainty seem necessary, in order to answer the express Language of several Scriptures.

---

## S E C T. VI.

*Objections answered.*

THE chief Objections which are raised against this Scheme, are these that follow.

*Objection I.* It is granted in this Scheme, that wheresoever there is a superior Fitness of Things, the Will of a wise Being is generally, if not universally determined or guided in its Choice by this superior Fitness: But where no such superior Fitness appears to the Understanding, there indeed the Understanding cannot represent one thing as fitter than another, nor determine the Choice of the Will; but then it may be said, a thousand other things may determine

F it,

it, without allowing the Will such a self-determining Power. As in the instance given, Suppose two Cakes be proposed to a hungry Man, tho' they are both equal and alike, yet his Will may be determined by some situation of one Cake in point of Light, and Reflection of Lights or Colours, or by its nearness to the right-hand of the Man, or some minute imperceptible Motions or Impressions made on the Body of the Man, either on his Eyes, on his Smell, on his Brain or Imagination, or some accidental Turn of the Nerves, of his Arm or Hand, or something in the Air or circumjacent Bodies, or some attending Circumstances ; any of these may determine his Will, or determine his Hand to take one of these Cakes rather than the other, without making the Will such a self-determining Power as this Scheme supposes.

*Answ.* If the Will don't determine itself, then it must be determined to chuse one of these Cakes by *Suasion*, or by *Mechanism* : If by *Suasion*, then it must be by some Motive derived from a superior Fitness for one of them to be chosen : But this is contrary to the original Supposition that they are both equal, and that the Senses or the Understanding find no difference. If it be by *Mechanism* that the Man is led to chuse one of the Cakes, then 'tis a mere Action of the Animal or Brutal Part, and not the Choice

Choice of the Man ; and thus the *Will* does nothing, or has no share in it, or at most only chuses afterward what the Hand hath first chosen, which is contrary to obvious Experience.

If a parallel Case were proposed in the World of Spirits, in which there is no Mechanism, such a Spirit would remain for ever undetermined any way, tho' it was a Matter of Importance to the Welfare of that Spirit to be determined some one way ; and the Will of that Spirit could not possibly chuse what was so very necessary to its Welfare, and so very easy to obtain, merely for want of superior Fitness in one of the Things proposed : But it is a very absurd Conception, that the blessed God should so form the Nature of a Spirit, and make it so impotent.

I might answer in the second place, If all Determinations of the Will are effected by *superior Fitness*, or by mere *Mechanism*, in either of these Cases there is no *Freedom of Choice*, no *real Liberty of Indifference* in any human Action : 'Tis all pure natural Necessity that determines the Will ; and in all these common Instances in human Life, *Natural Liberty or Freedom of Choice* is entirely lost, and the Scheme of *Fatality* is introduced ; and how absurd that is, will appear in the following Section.

*Object. II.* The Doctrine which has been proposed, depends in a great measure upon this Supposition, That the Will can determine itself without any prior Reason borrow'd from things, to chuse one thing out of two or more, which are perfectly equal ; but this seems to be impossible : For it is a plain Axiom of Truth, that *Nothing is or comes to pass without a sufficient Reason why it is, or why it is in this manner rather than in another.* Now, if two things are perfectly equal in all Circumstances, there is no *sufficient Reason* why one should be, or why the Will of God or Man should chuse it ; and consequently the Will would never chuse nor be determined one way rather than another. If a true Balance has equal Weights, the Scales will for ever hang equal, and neither one nor the other rise or sink, because there is no sufficient Reason why one should weigh down the other. Thus it is and would be evidently with the *Will of Man*, in case two such equal Objects were proposed, whereof one had no more Fitness or Goodness than the other : And it would be the same thing with the *Will of God* ; for if there were not one best or fittest Scheme or System of Worlds, he would have never chosen or determined to make any World at all ; for as without a sufficient Reason nothing can be, so the infi-

infinitely wise Being never determines himself to act without a sufficient Reason.

*Answ.* Scales and Balances, and all other things besides a Spirit or Being endow'd with a Will, are, properly and philosophically speaking, *passive* Beings; and therefore they must have some Reason or Cause sufficient to determine them one way rather than another, before they can be determined: But Spirits are Beings of an *active* Nature, the Spring of Action is within themselves, and they can determine themselves. The Will of God is an active and self-determining Power; and the Will of Man perhaps in this respect is the chief Image of God in this lower World, as it is an *active* Power that can determine itself. Why must all Beings and all their Powers be supposed to be *passive*?

It is granted indeed, that the Will sometimes borrows a Reason for its Determination from various Occasions or Arguments: Sometimes from very strong Motives, and the transcendently superior Fitnesses of Things; sometimes from weaker Motives, where the Fitness of Things does but just appear superior; and sometimes it determines its own Choice between Things in themselves indifferent, and where there is no superior Fitness at all, or at least none that appears.

Yet let it be again observed here, as I have intimated before, that when two equal

Things are proposed to the Will, there may be a very sufficient Reason why it should determine its Choice in general some way or other, tho' there be no sufficient Reason in the Things themselves for determining in this way rather than that. There is very sufficient Reason why a hungry Man should eat, when two equal picces of Bread lie before him; but he may chuse which piece he will eat, without any other reason than because he will. So there may be very sufficient Reason why God should create a World; but if you ask why he should create this sort of World rather than another, and this sort of Creatures rather than others, which may be equally fit, he borrows the Reason for it only from himself; his own good pleasure is a sufficient Reason: He doth it because he will; nor is any other Reason necessary besides his own self-determining Power. 'Tis supremely fit he should do what he pleases. Must the Will of God be such a *passive* Power as is not able to act of and from itself?

*Object.* III. This Doctrine of Liberty represents the Will of an intelligent Being as a sort of *blind Power* determining itself without Reason in many instances, acting without any Motive, chusing and preferring one thing to another without any ground of Choice or Preference; whereas in all intelli-

intelligent Beings, whether God or Man, there are no such blind Principles of Choice or Action.

*Answ.* 1. It is granted indeed, that this Doctrine does not ascribe *Understanding*, or Sight and Perception to the *Will*, for that would be to confound those two distinct Powers or Principles in a Spirit: But this Doctrine keeps those two Powers of *Understanding* and *Will* in their proper Characters; the *Understanding* sees or perceives Truth and Falshood, Fitness and Unfitness, Good and Evil, as far as any such Characters or Qualities appear; and the *Will* freely determines and chuses after this Perception, as it pleases. Generally indeed, and according to Nature, it receives Direction for its own Choice or Determination from the Perceptions of the *Understanding*, where superior Fitness or Goodness appears: In an unwise Being it does not always certainly and constantly so chuse or determine: In a wise and good Being it always chuses according to this appearing Fitness. But where this superior Fitness or Goodness does not appear, what can possibly remain, but that the Will of the wisest Being must forbear to chuse, act and determine at all, or else it must determine, chuse and act of itself and from itself?

*Answ.* 2. Let it be remember'd here, what has been hinted in some of the former

Essays, that tho' the *Understanding* and *Will* are not improperly represented as two distinct Powers of a Spirit, yet they are not two distinct Beings or Substances: 'Tis one and the same Spirit, the same intelligent and rational Being that both understands and wills, that perceives the Fitness or Goodness of Things, and that generally acts or chuses according to this perception: And therefore this one Spirit, this rational Being which has the determining Power as well as the perceptive Power, and which properly determines and chuses as well as perceives, is no such *blind Agent* as the Objection represents.

And yet it must be acknowledged, that where the Fitness or Unfitness, the Good or Evil of things does not appear to this rational Being, or this Spirit, where it can discover no superior Fitness or Goodness, there it must act by its own Choice, and determine itself as it pleases, when it has no other Guide or Rule for Self-determination: And the Matter of Fact in many instances is so plain as not to be deny'd. When two Cakes lie before an hungry Man, in which no manner of difference appears either in the Colour, Situation, Quantity or inviting Qualities of them, 'tis indeed his Hunger is the Motive which really determines him to eat one of them; and it is a rational, and not a blind irrational Action to take one of these

these Cakes and eat it. The Man is guided by Reason, so far as Reason can possibly guide him. But when Reason utterly ceases to guide or direct the Man, because of the Equality of the two Cakes, there it must be merely the self-moving Power or the Will of this rational Being which determines which of the two Cakes he shall eat, because there is no superior Motive or Reason to chuse one rather than the other. One might say the same concerning two new Guineas, or new Half-pence offered to our Choice.

In such a case, I plainly feel myself to determine my own Choice in and of myself, and I am conscious of no superior Motive, I know of nothing without me that makes me prefer one to the other : Now is it possible that I can be determined by a superior Motive of which I have no manner of Knowledge, no Consciousness, no Idea ?

In this place I cannot forbear to cite what I lately read, upon my Review of these Essays, in the *Notes* on Bishop King's Treatise on the *Origin of Evil*. " To argue still that some minute imperceptible Causes, some particular Circumstances in our own Bodies, or those about us, must determine even these seemingly indifferent Actions, is either running into the Absurdity of making us act upon Motives which we don't apprehend ; or saying

“ saying that we act Mechanically, i. e. do  
“ not act at all: And in the last place, to  
“ say, that we are determined to chuse any  
“ of these Trifles just as we happen to fix  
“ our Thoughts upon it in particular at  
“ the very instant of Action, is either at-  
“ tributing all to the *self-moving Power*  
“ of the *Mind*, which is granting the  
“ Question; or else referring us to the mi-  
“ nute and imperceptible Causes above-  
“ mentioned; or else obtruding upon us  
“ that idle unmeaning word *Chance* instead  
“ of a Physical Cause, which is saying no-  
“ thing at all. How hard must Men be  
“ pres'd under an Hypothesis, when they  
“ fly to such evasive Shifts as these! How  
“ much easier and better would it be to  
“ give up all such unknown and unac-  
“ countable Impulses, and own that both  
“ common Sense and Experience dictate an  
“ independent, free, self-moving Principle,  
“ the true, the obvious, the only Source  
“ of Action?” p. 165.

*Object. IV.* But whatsoever may be said of the blind and arbitrary Determinations of the *Will of Man*, without Reason and without Motive, surely it is not so with the *Great and Blessed God*; all his Actions are wise, and fit, and good: His Will always chuses and determines according to the Fitness or Unfitness of Things: He never does any thing in an arbitrary Manner, or

by meer Will and Pleasure; and tho' we are at a loss to find out the superior Fitness or Unfitness of many Things by which the Divine Will is determined to chuse or refuse, yet he who hath all the infinite Ideas of Things real and possible within the grasp of his Understanding, can see those superior Fitnesses or Unfitnesses which are unsearchable to us, and he always determines and acts according to them: for infinite Wisdom cannot act otherwise.

*Answ.* 1. To guard against the Charge of supposing the Great God to act in an *arbitrary* manner, without good Reason, and without fit Motives, let it be again consider'd, what has been often hinted before, that God never decrees or acts in general without a just Design and Reason for it, and a proper End to be obtained by it: as for instance; If God determine to create rather than not to create, there was probably a Reason for it taken from the Consequences of Creation which the Blessed God designed, and had in his view: But when several distinct and different Creatures or Worlds appear in Idea to his infinite Understanding, in any of which there is no superior Fitness, but which in themselves are equally fit, and by each of which, consider'd as Means, he may equally obtain the same *End*, then he must chuse one of these Means, *i.e.* one of these Worlds in particular, only by the Determination of his

his own Will: And if this be called *Sovereign and Arbitrary Conduct*, it is still no more than the eternal Nature of Things requires, and it shews him to be a proper Sovereign over all his Creatures, and to have a compleat Freedom of Indifference or absolute Choice in these his Determinations.

*Object.* V. Perhaps it will be objected here, that if two Things are perfectly equal, and if the Will of God or Man determines itself to chuse one of them without a sufficient Reason taken from the things, to determine it, then it is determined by mere *Chance* or *Accident*: Now 'tis very hard to suppose concerning any wise Being, and especially concerning the All-wise God, that in any Instance of Action he is determined by Chance.

*Answ.* *Chance* is a word invented to signify the production of an Effect in the Corporeal World, whose Cause we see not, and for which we cannot account; then we say, *It came by Chance*, as tho' there was no Cause of it. Chances or Accidents are such Events as we see not the Train of Causes which produce them. But in the Acts of the Will there is nothing can be ascribed to Chance, for the Will itself is the obvious Cause of its own Determinations.

The word *Chance* always means something done *without Design*. *Chance* and *Design* stand in direct opposition to each other;

other; and consequently *Chance* can never be properly apply'd to Acts of the Will, which is the Spring of all *Design*, and which designs to chuse whatsoever it doth chuse, whether there be any superior Fitness in the Thing it chuses or no; and it designs to determine itself to one Thing where two Things perfectly equal are proposed, merely because it will.

Nor can I think of any way to refute this Doctrine, unless we could prove that amongst all the infinite Mediums which may appear to the human or the divine Mind towards the Attainment of any proposed End, there are no two Mediums that are equal, or which cannot be equally accommodated to their own purposes: And I think this is more than any Man can prove.

*Object.* VI. If we may judge of Things by the nicest Observations that we can possibly make among all the Beings we know or converse with, there is no such thing in Nature, nor ever was, as two Things proposed to the Will of God or Man which are perfectly equal or indifferent, or wherein every Circumstance was so entirely alike, that there is no reason for the Will to incline to one side rather than the other. There is no such thing as two *Leaves of a Tree* exactly alike, you may travel and search till your Feet and your Eyes ake, and never find them. Even in two *Grains of Sand,*

*Sand, or two Drops of Milk or Water,* Microscopes will always shew you some difference ; and therefore this Doctrine of two or more things perfectly equal is founded upon a mere imaginary Supposition, and the *Hypothesis* that is built upon it cannot stand.

*Answ.* What if there are no two *Leaves of Trees*, no two *Grains of Sand*, or *Drops of Water or Milk* perfectly alike, because they are all compounded Bodies ? yet in *two Bodies perfectly simple*, such as two pieces of solid Matter without a Pore, there may be perfect equality and likeness. And surely if not in fact, yet in the Divine Idea of Possibles there may be many Parts of Matter like and equal. If we are allow'd to talk of two distinct *Parts of Time*, or distinct *Parts of Space* in which the World might have been created, it must be confess'd that these Parts of Space or Time are perfectly alike, and consequently that the Determination of the Will of God to create the World in one of these *Parts of Time or Space* rather than another, was intirely from his own Will.

If one would descend to the minute specifick Particles of which distinct Bodies are composed, we should see abundant reason to believe there are thousands of such little Particles or Atoms of Matter, which are perfectly equal and alike, and could give

no distinct Determination to the Will of God where to place them. Is it not acknowledged by Philosophers that the different Kinds of Bodies are made up of Corpuscles of different Shapes and different Sizes; but that each particular Kind is made of similar Corpuscles, and nearly equal also? Thus for instance, The Particles of common Water have some essential difference from the Particles of Oil, Blood, Quicksilver, Animal or Vegetable Juices, and other Liquids; but they are similar among themselves: Now if we consider the immense quantity of Water which is in this World, and the innumerable small essential Particles that compose it, is there not abundant reason to suppose that Millions of these Particles are equal and alike, rather than to imagine that God the Creator took special care, that among the innumerable Millions of these aqueous Particles which he made in all the Rivers and Oceans in the World, there should not be two of them alike and equal; and yet that all of them should be so nearly equal, and so much alike, as to distinguish them from the Particles of other Bodies?

We might use the same sort of Reasoning concerning Air, Light, Sun-beams, concerning Earth, Sand, Stone and Chalk, concerning Grass, Herbs, Leaves and Trees; the Hair, Skin, Flesh and Bones of Animals, and

and all other specifick Particles of Bodies whether solid or fluid, that compose this lower World: We might ascend to the Sun, the vastest of all Bodies, and consider the infinite Myriads of luminous or fiery Particles which go to compose it, and which perhaps are vastly more in number than go to compose all the Planets put together, and then enquire whetlier there are not two of these Particles exactly alike: This Argument would run through the whole Universe of the Planetary Worlds, with all their Contents and Inhabitants; and can we suppose that the Creator took such exact care as never to make two Particles of any Body perfectly equal and similar, and at the same time that he took care to make each of them so nearly equal and similar, as to keep all the Particles of one Species of Bodies in Shape and Size sufficiently distinct from the Particles that compose every other Species? He that can suppose this, plainly appears to serve an *Hypothesis*.

'Tis evident enough that the Objector's Supposition, that *there are no two things equal and alike*, is only brought in to oppose this Doctrine which I have laid down, and that without any proof, or indeed probability: And the Supposition that *there are or may be a multitude of things which are intirely alike and equal*, is certainly a possible thing, and vastly the more probable of

the

the two. If we had no proof of it, yet the various Difficulties or seeming Absurdities that press hard upon the contrary Supposition, *viz.* *That no two Things are equal, and that the Will of God or Man is always determined by some superior Fitness of Things,* would incline one to renounce that Hypothesis. These will be represented at large in the next Section.

---

## S E C T. VII.

*The Difficulties that attend the contrary Scheme.*

WHEN we enter into a narrow Disquisition of the eternal Counsels of God, and the Determinations of his Will; perhaps we shall find some Difficulties pressing us on all sides, which cannot be clearly and compleatly relieved by the Understanding and reasoning Powers of Man, at least in this present State. I do not pretend that my Sett of Sentiments is entirely free from all: But the chief Difficulty is to find any Scheme which has less or fewer than this which I have represented. Till I see that done, I think I must be content to abide where I am. 'Tis possible I may meet with some new Objections against mine,

which I had not thought of before; but while every Scheme has some hardships, I persuade myself that Hypothesis may still be allow'd to come nearest to the Truth, which has the least and fewest Difficulties attending it. But when the Difficulties are many more and greater which hang upon any one human Scheme than do upon another, we are naturally led to suppose that such a Scheme can never be true, or at least that it is by no means so probable as the opposite.

Let us then consider what will be the Consequences of supposing that the Divine Will in all its Determinations and Decrees whatsoever, is universally, certainly and unalterably influenced by the superior Fitness of Things.

I. *Difficulty.* Then there is nothing amongst all the Works of God's Creation, or his Providence, or his Government of Creatures thro' Time or Eternity, left free to him with a *Liberty of Choice or Indifference*, since this Opinion supposes there is but one single Train of fittest Things, or one Sett of Things supremely fit among all the Millions of Possibles that come within the Divine Survey. Then every Atom in the Creation, together with the Shape of it, and the Size and Situation of it through the whole Universe, every Motion in the World of corporeal Nature appointed by God, together

gether with the Times and Periods, Minutes and Moments of every Event, the least as well as the greatest, (except those which are introduced by inferior Spirits) are all eternally necessary, because they are the fittest that could be.

And I might add, they are as unchangeably necessary as the Being of God himself, *i. e.* with a consequential, if not with a simultaneous Necessity; for at least from the very position of his Essence and Existence, all conceivable Things, with all their infinite Relations and their eternal Fitnesses arise, and they all appear to his View: And the only one Scheme of Things which is most fit, is necessarily determined into Existence and actual Futurity, with all the minutest Parts and Appendices thereto, because he sees the superior Fitness of them all: Thus the least Appearance and Event in the corporeal World throughout all the Ages of Creation and Providence, is unalterably necessary, if not equally necessary with God's own Being.

Let us see now how such a Proposition would sound, and with what Aspect such a Scheme of Things would appear to our Minds, if we enter into the detail of them. Then God could not have abstain'd from making this our World at all, nor from making it just such as it is, nor withheld his hand from Creation one Moment longer:

then he could not have made one more Planet or Star, or one less than he has done: nay, not so much as one Atom or Dust more or less in any Star or Planet, nor have placed them in any other form. He could not have given the Sun one more Beam, nor any Morning since the Creation one more Gleam of Light, or one less Shade of Darkness. Then the Ever-blessed God could not have been happy one Moment longer in Solitude, or without Creatures, nor begun to form any part of this Universe, or this Globe earlier or later than he did; nor could he have caused one Spire of Grass to grow on this Earth, nor one Drop of Water in the Sea, nor one Sand more or less at the bottom of it. He could not continue the material World, nor any Atom of it a Moment longer in Existence, nor have fixed the Periods even of the minutest Beings any otherwise than he has done. Not a Drop of Rain could fall, not a Particle of Water flow, nor a dusky Atom of Smoak ascend in any other manner, nor at any other Minute than it doth; nor could the Great God have decreed it otherwise in the least Punctilio, so far as mere corporeal Nature is concerned therin, because each of these was supremely fit, and the original Train of Causes which necessarily produced them.

This

This would extend to the Affairs of Human Nature also, and to the Works of Providence, Redemption and Grace, as well as to the inanimate World and God's creating Influences. The *Americans* and the *Hottentots* could not have been formed otherwise than under such special Disadvantages; nor could *Great Britain* have had the Gospel withheld from it one Moment longer. Nor indeed, according to this Scheme, could God have withheld his *Son* from being sent to redeem the World, nor withheld his *Spirit* with all its Gifts and Influences from the Inhabitants of this Globe, nor have omitted any one Miracle towards the Propagation of this Gospel; for the Will of God was absolutely determined to do all this by its superior Fitness.

What strange Doctrine is this, contrary to all our Ideas of the Dominion of God? Does it not destroy the Glory of his Liberty of Choice, and take away from the Creator and Governor and Benefactor of the World, that most free and sovereign Agent, all the Glory of this sort of Freedom? Does it not seem to make him a kind of intelligent Instrument of eternal Necessity, an almost mechanical Medium of Fate, and introduce Mr. *Hobbes*'s Doctrine of *Fatality* and *Necessity* into all things that God hath to do with? Doth it not seem to represent the blessed God as a Being of vast Understanding

## 86 *The Difficulties that attend*

and Consciousness, as well as of Power and Efficiency, but still to leave him *without a Will* to chuse among all the Objects within his view? In short, it seems to make the Blessed God a sort of Almighty Minister of Fate under its universal and supreme Influence. Thus speaks the *Heathen Stoick* in a Tragedy:

*Quæ nexa suis currunt causis  
Non licet ipsum vertisse Jovem.* Senec.

Thus Causes run, a long connected Train ;  
Not *Jove* himself can break th' eternal  
Chain.

And it was the profess'd Sentiment of some of the Ancients, that *Fate was above the Gods.*

Is it not abundantly better to suppose that among the infinite Variety of *Possibles* in the Survey of the Great God, there might be many Schemes of Grand Design, and many Mediums of Accomplishment, both in the larger and minuter Parts of them, which might be equally fit and proper? And that God by his own Will determined which Scheme he would chuse, and which Medium he would make use of to bring it to pass? And that he made or render'd this particular Scheme and these Mediums become fit and good, pleasing and agreeable by his

his own chusing them? So a Man, when he has once chosen for himself one thing out of many which he proposed to himself, and all which before appear'd to him to be equally good, makes that which he has chosen particularly agreeable and good to himself by his Choice of it, and for ever after prefers it because his own Will has chosen it: he delights in his own free Choice.

*Object.* Perhaps it may be reply'd here, that even according to the Scheme that I have proposed, all those Things are allow'd to be eternally and unchangeably necessary in which God beholds a superior Fitness; and these perhaps are far more in number than those which have no such superior Fitness, or which in themselves are equal and indifferent: And then it will follow that even in this Scheme of mine, Fatality is introduced into far the greatest parts of the Works of God: For if there be the least degree of inequality in any two or more Objects, the Divine Wisdom beholds it, and finds out the superior Fitness, and is determined thereby: And then probably there are but few things left which have such a *perfect Equality* in them, as to be the Objects of *free Choice*: All the rest is *mere Fate*.

*Answ.* But to this I answer, That if we suppose no more than two different sorts of Worlds to have had equal Fitness in the

Divine View, before he chose to create one of them, together with the Creatures and the Inhabitants in them, then it follows that every Creature and every Circumstance of every Creature in this one Universe or World, which God has actually chosen and created, were all Matters of indifference, and consequently were the Object of his *free Choice*: For tho' every Creature in this Universe, or the World which now is made, should be allow'd to have a superior Fitness with regard to the place it holds in this present Universe, (which is very improbable, and more than can be proved) yet every individual Part or Creature of this World once stood in the view of God as a matter of mere indifference, and an Object of *free Choice*, since another sort of World might have been created, with all its different Parts, Creatures or Inhabitants.

We might proceed further, and say the same concerning every single Planet, and the Creatures or Inhabitants of it, and perhaps concerning every large Spot of Land, every Mountain, every Island, every Sea and River in any of these Planets, that they might have been alter'd as to some Atoms or Drops that compose them, tho' the other parts of that Planetary World had been the same: And this reasonable Supposition provides Objects enough for the Divine Choice,

Choice, and the Freedom of the Will of God to exert itself.

We might also descend to much minuter Parts of the Creation, to every Tree, and Leaf, and Flower, to every Plant and Animal, to every Feather and Hair of Fowl and Beast, as well as to the inanimate Parts of any of these Globes: There does not seem to be an absolute Necessity that every minute Part, and Pore and Fibre of every Species and of every Individual should be precisely what they now are, even tho' the chief part of the Form of each of them were the same as it is: And this will still provide new Objects for the Choice of God, and his perfect Liberty. Thus his Actions of free Choice will be vastly more numerous than those to which he is any way determined by a superior Fitness.

II. *Difficulty.* According to this supposed Scheme, that is, If one single Thing be the only fittest, and if God be determined necessarily to this one Thing, then the free Grace and Goodness of God, and the special Thankfulness of Man for his Benefits, seem to be much diminished, and in a great measure precluded: For in this View of Things, God could not bestow one Grain of Favour more or less upon any Creature than he hath done; nor could he have chosen any other Object for the Exercise of his Mercy and Goodness, either among the

Varieties of the Animal or Intellectual Creatures than what he has chosen. And would not this take away a great part of my Obligation to Thankfulness for any of his Benefits, and in a great measure conceal all Obligation to thank him for his Choice of me to be the Object of them, if I must believe that God could not have withheld these Benefits from me, nor could have chosen any other Object for those Blessings which he has made me partaker of, nor given me a Grain less of any good thing which I enjoy relating to this Life or another?

'Tis true, you will say, God has done me as much Good as he could do, and therefore I am under the highest Obligations to him : But let it be remember'd also, (if I may express the consequence of this Opinion) that he has made me as unhappy as he could make me, according to this Scheme, and see whether this does not diminish or vacate a great part of this Obligation.

Will not this destroy, or vastly abate the Reasons of Gratitude and Love to God in those who receive his Favours, when Kings and Slaves, Rich Men and Beggars, Strong Men and Cripples, Creatures whose Life is filled with Pain and Poverty, or whose whole Period of Life is Affluence and Ease, were distinguish'd only by the superior Fitness of their Circumstances ? What is there of free Mercy in his disposal of Benefits ? What can we find of Mercy in the Decree  
or

or Providence of God, which distinguishes the Happy from the Miserable? What is it that raises them above the others, but that God was necessarily determined to divide these distinct Portions to them all from the superior Fitness of Things? And have not *Abraham* the Friend of God, *David* the King, *Paul* the Apostle, Sir *Isaac Newton* the Philosopher, *Judas* the Traytor, *Irus* the Cripple, *Davus* the Slave, and *Jack Adams* the Ideot, all equal reason of Thankfulness to the free Bounty of their Maker, since so far as he acted in their Composition of Mind or Body, or in their original Circumstances of Life, he determined each in such a particular manner, because his own Will was thus necessarily determined, and therefore he could not have done otherwise.

III. *Difficulty.* If there be but one such superior Fitness among all the Ends and Means which are in the comprehensive Survey of God, and if God be under an unalterable Necessity of determining according to this superior Fitness, thence it will follow that every thing possible is necessary, and every thing that is not necessary is impossible.

There is scarce any real Difference between things necessary and things possible, even in the view of God himself, according to this Scheme of *all Things being determined by supreme Fitness.* The difference is chiefly in our Apprehension, by reason of our

92 *The Difficulties that attend*

our short-sighted Views of Things, who cannot discover this superior Fitness. But in reality, and in the sight of God, according to this Hypothesis, nothing is possible to be done by God himself but what hath this superior Fitness, and that is always necessary, and must be done.

And according to this Opinion also, what is not necessary is really impossible, and can never come into Existence, because it has not this superior Fitness. In this way of thinking, there neither is, nor ever was a Medium between the Necessity of what is future, and the Impossibility of that which is not future, since there is but one fittest Means or End; and what is not fittest is impossible, and always was so. Now does not this appear strange and incredible Doctrine?

I know it will be *objected* here, that this way of talking confounds *Metaphysical Necessity* with *Moral Necessity*, which are very distinct things. A *Metaphysical Necessity*, say some, is a Necessity arising from the Essence or Nature of Things, and takes place only where the Opposite implies a Contradiction; so all the Semidiameters of a Circle are necessarily equal, because it is inconsistent in the Nature of Things they should be unequal. But a *Moral Necessity* is that whereby a most Wise Being is necessarily led to chuse that which is best, or

to act that which is fittest. Now in this View there is a wide difference, say they, betwixt Things necessary and possible, *i. e.* Things that are *Metaphysically possible* and which are *Morally necessary*. A Thing is said to be *Metaphysically possible* wherein there is no inconsistence in the Nature of Things, and such are ten thousand Essences which yet shall never exist: And this is very different from a Thing which is *Morally necessary*, *i. e.* which an All-wise Being wills and chuses out of ten thousand Possibles, because of its superior Fitness, even tho' Divine Wisdom cannot chuse otherwise.

But to this I *answer*, That in Philosophical Strictness and the Truth of Things, this *Moral Necessity* and *Impossibility*, and this *Metaphysical Necessity* and *Impossibility* will appear to be very near a-kin: And tho' there may be some difference between these two Necessaries, *viz.* *Moral* and *Metaphysical*, as to the *immediate* and *proxime* Cause and Reason of their Necessity, yet the *Necessity* of both of them is a *Physical* or *Natural Necessity*, they are both equally strong and unalterable, and the *original* Cause and Reason why both of them are necessary, lies in the very Nature of Things: I might say the same also concerning their *Impossibility*. As for Example; If the Being *A* cannot possibly exist because

94 *The Difficulties that attend*

because it carries in it some Ideas or Properties which are naturally inconsistent, so neither can *B* possibly exist, because it doth not carry in it a superior Fitness ; since, according to this Hypothesis, it is inconsistent with the *Nature of the All-wise God* to make *B* exist, because it was not supremely fit ; and it is inconsistent in the *Nature of Things* that *B* should ever come into Existence, because it wanted one Property necessary to the possibility of its existing, and that is *supreme Fitness* : Thus from the very Nature of God, and from the Nature of Things, 'tis impossible that *B* should ever exist. And how much does this differ from a Natural or Physical Impossibility ?

Hence it appears, according to this Hypothesis, that it was true from Eternity that every Thing was naturally impossible which had not in its Nature this superior Fitness ; and if it had in its Nature this superior Fitness, then it was not only possible, but had a sort of natural Necessity to exist, which was the thing to be proved, and which is the Difficulty under which this Opinion still seems to labour, notwithstanding the offer'd Distinction.

IV. *Difficulty.* Another Difficulty that seems to bear hard upon this Hypothesis, of *all Things being determined by superior Fitness*, is this, *viz.* Then there would be scarce any real Difference between the *Moral* and

and the *Positive Laws* of God. The one would be every whit as necessary as the other, both in themselves as Laws, and with regard to God the Law-giver: For if all the *Positive Commands* and Institutions of God are given because he saw an antecedent Fitness and Goodness in them superior to any other Commands that could be given at that Time, and in those Circumstances; and if all his *Moral Commands* are given upon the same reason, will it not follow that the *Positive Laws* are as necessary for that Time and those Circumstances as the *Moral Laws* are in all Times and Circumstances? I say, allowing this difference, that the *Moral Commands* are necessary at *all* Times and Occasions, and the *Positive* only on *some particular* Occasions. And upon this Hypothesis, 'tis no more in the power of God to have alter'd the *Positive Commands* on those particular Occasions, than it is in his power to change the *Moral Commands* on any Occasion whatsoever. Then every Pin and Tack in the Tabernacle of *Moses*, every little Punctilio and Circumstance in all the *Levitical Rites* of Purification and Sacrifice, every Colour and Thread which is of divine Appointment in the *Curtains* of the Tabernacle, or the *Vestments* of the Priest, were as necessary at that Time and Place as the *Ten Commands*, or any Rule of Virtue and Piety what-

96 *The Difficulties that attend*

whatsoever; since they did necessitate and determine the Will of God to appoint them by his seeing a superior Fitness and Goodness in them all.

It is true indeed, We who are short-sighted Creatures, and cannot penetrate so far into the Fitness and Unfitness of Things, cannot find out the *Positive Commands* of God by our Reasoning, as we can many of the greater and more obvious *Moral Laws*: yet let it be observed also, that these *Moral Laws* in some of the lesser Branches of them, and in their Application to particular Cases, perhaps can hardly be found out by our short and feeble Reasonings; and in this respect the difference between *Moral* and *Positive Laws* would grow less and less, even with regard to us, till in many Instances the difference would vanish. But with regard to God himself, and in the Nature of Things, they would be both equally necessary, and God could not appoint any of them otherwise than he has done.

V. *Difficulty.* Then there would be no such Thing as any *Liberty of Choice* and *Indifference* in the World, or at least only among imperfect intelligent Beings who are endow'd with Wills, and that but seldom too: And this very Liberty would arise merely from their Imperfection, i.e. because in some Things they could not find  
the

the superior Fitness, since they cannot extend their Knowledge deep and wide enough to see all the Fitnesses and Unfitnesses of Things. For according to this Scheme, all the Decrees and Actions of God the most perfect Spirit, about himself, or about his Creatures, would be ever necessary; and all the material Creation, the whole Universe of Bodies, and every natural Motion therein, so far as ordained by God even in their remotest Causes, would be necessary from the Beginning to the End of all things: And a very wise Man who sees the Fitnesses of Things, would have scarce any thing of this Freedom, for he would be always necessarily determined in his Choice by this superior Fitness.

But let us think a little further on this Point: If this Opinion were true in the whole Scheme, and all Spirits, perfect or imperfect, were necessarily determin'd to act according as things appeared fit or unfit to the Mind, and if these Appearances were the necessary Result of the Situation of Man or other intelligent Creatures, whether wise or unwise, among a variety of Objects; then, I think, there would be no Freedom of Choice, no Liberty of Indifference at all, no proper self-determining Power, either in Heaven or Earth, either in God, Angels or Men, but all would be *one huge Scheme of*

98 *The Difficulties that attend  
Fatality both in the Intellectual and Mate-  
rial World.*

Shall it be reply'd here, What? Is there no *Liberty of Indifference* to be found any where but where the Objects are intirely equal? Have I not *Liberty of Choice*, when I chuse one House to dwell in, or prefer one piece of Cloth to wear rather than another, because I find one better and fitter for my use than another? Does not all the World call this a *Liberty of Choice*, and proper *Freedom of the Will*, notwithstanding the superior Qualifications or Motives that inclined me to chuse this and refuse that?

I answer, and allow this to be a proper *Freedom* or *Liberty of Choice*, supposing the Will only to be *directed* and *inclined* by these Motives, and not powerfully and *necessarily determined* by them. But if once we assert the Will to be necessarily determined by these Motives, then it has no proper self-determining Power in these Instances, and the very Idea of proper *Liberty* vanishes and is lost.

Is it not much better therefore to suppose, that the Influence of *Motives* in the *Understanding* reaches no further than to *direct the Will*, without a certain or necessary *Determination* of it, wheresoever there are Motives arising from *superior Fitness*? And may we not reasonably conceive both in

in this Universe, as well as in the World of Possibles, that there are Millions of Objects wherein this superior Fitness either is not, or does not appear; and here is still a larger Space for the exercise of perfect Freedom of Choice, and wherein the Will is determined by nothing but itself.

**VI. Difficulty.** It may be consider'd as another Difficulty and Hardship which would attend this Opinion, that there are a great number of Scriptures which would have a most absurd sound, if they were to be interpreted upon this foot, *viz.* the necessary Determination of the Will of God in every thing by the antecedent and superior Fitness of Things. There is no Act of Providence or Grace which the Scripture represents as a free Favour of the blessed God, but would be hereby made necessary, and God would be limited to that one Object and that one Action. Let us consider a few particulars.

Numb. iv. 37. *Moses saith to the Israelites, Because he loved thy Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, therefore he chose their Seed after them:* But in truth, according to this Doctrine, he loved them because they were the fittest for his Love, and God could not do otherwise; and he chose them and their Seed, because he could make no other Choice.

Deut. xxi. 5. *The Priests the Sons of Levi, the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister*

100 *The Difficulties that attend minister unto him*; i. e. because he saw such a superior Fitness in the Sons of *Levi*, that he could not chuse any other Tribe.

1 Sam. x. 24. God chose *Saul* to make him a *King*, but he was determined to it by the superior Fitness of this Choice.

Psal. cxxxii. 13. *The Lord hath chosen Sion, he hath desired it for his Habitation*; i. e. because he saw it so fit, that he could not chuse any other Dwelling in that Age.

1 Cor. i. 27. *God hath chosen the foolish things of this World, and the weak things, and things that are despised*. 'Tis true, he gives a reason for it, viz. that he might confound the *Wise*, &c. but then 'tis plain, he could not have chosen the *Wise*, the *Mighty*, and the *Honourable*.

1 Thess. ii. 13. *God hath from the Beginning chosen you to Salvation*; i. e. because it was so supremely fit, that he could not pass you by without chusing you.

How frequent is the Expression in Scripture of God's *chusing this or that Person or Thing, this or that Family or Nation*, for particular purposes in His Providence and Grace? And 'tis represented still as a Matter of *free Favour*: But according to this Interpretation, there is no true *Liberty of Choice* or free Mercy in all these Things, since there was such a *superior Fitness* on that

that side, that it was not possible for God to have determined or chose otherwise.

But let us proceed to some other Texts.  
*Eph. ii. 4.* *God who is rich in Mercy, for his great Love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ:* But according to this Opinion, he could not possibly have loved the *Ephesians* less than he did, nor let them go on in their *death of trespasses and sins* without quickening Grace.

*I Tim. i. 13.* *I was before a Blasphemer and a Persecutor,* saith St. Paul, *but I obtained Mercy . . . and the Grace of God was exceeding abundant.* But this Opinion would interpret the Words, that God could not withhold Mercy from me, and therefore *I obtain'd it : and the Grace of God was exceeding abundant to me,* because it was not possible it should have been less.

*Rom. ix. 23, 24.* *That he might make known the Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy . . . not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles :* But this Opinion obscures these Riches of glorious Grace, by shewing, that God could chuse no other Vessels of Mercy but the *Jews* of old time, and the *Gentiles* afterward, and in that proportion in which he chose them.

*Rom. x. 20.* *Isaiah grows very bold and saith, I was found of them that sought me not ; i. e. God was necessarily determin-*

ned by the superior and antecedent Fitness of Things to be found of those who never sought him.

And if we read the whole ninth Chapter to the *Romans*, we find God is there represented as making a distinction of Mercy between *Isaac* and *Ishmael*, between *Jacob* and *Esaū*, between the *Jews* and *Gentiles* in favour of the *Jews*, and afterwards rejecting the *Jews*, and receiving the *Gentiles*: Let these Texts be construed in what sense you please with regard to Persons, or Families, or Nations, or with regard to Temporal, Spiritual, or Eternal Blessings, still all is represented by the Apostle as instances of God's sovereign Goodness and special Mercy, in the free Choice of some, and the neglecting of others. But according to this Opinion, there is no such thing as *Liberty of Choice or Indifference* with God in any of these Actions; for he could have acted no otherwise than he did in any one Punctilio of Grace or Providence: His Will was necessarily determined as to all his Benefits of every kind, and to the Persons who were Objects of them, by antecedent superior Fitness, so that he could not have bestow'd nor withheld these Blessings in any other manner than he has withheld or bestow'd them.

I grant always, and have always granted, that wherefover there is such an antecedent sup-

superior Fitness of Things, God acts according to it, so as never to contradict it; and particularly in all his judicial Proceedings as a Governor and Distributer of Rewards and Punishments, he has a constant regard to Vice and Virtue, to superior Fitness and Unfitness, tho' he may reward, or rather bestow beyond our Merit, or punish less. And even in Acts of mere Bounty and free Goodness, we must always grant and suppose him never to act what is not fit. Yet we may also suppose, when we consider God as a Benefactor, that in his infinite Survey of Things, there may be a thousand equally fit Objects for this Goodness, and a thousand equal Ways of manifesting it. Now this reasonable Supposition leaves him a very large Field for the exercise of his sovereign Good-Pleasure, and the free Determinations of his Will and Choice, both as to the Blessings which he bestows, and the Persons or Nations on whom he bestows them.

Let us take one further Step, and shew that even the Grace of God in sending his own Son to redeem us, is much obscured by this opinion of the constant Determination of the Will of God by some superior Fitness. John iii. 16. *God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have eternal Life;* i.e. according to this Opinion, God so greatly loved the

the World of Mankind because he saw it antecedently most fit for his Love, and therefore could not love it less; and he gave his only begotten Son, because he saw it so supremely fit, that he could not withhold him; and he made this Covenant of Grace and Proposal of Salvation, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish*, because this Proposal was so supremely fit also, that it was not possible for him to make any other Covenant or any other Proposal of Salvation.

Ver. 17. *God sent not his Son to condemn the World*, i. e. because he saw it unfit that he should do so, and therefore he could not have sent his Son on this dreadful Errand.

Rom. v. 8. *God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were Sinners Christ died for us*; but according to this Doctrine he was so necessarily determined to give this particular Instance of Love to Sinners, and to save them in this manner, that he could not have refused to give his Son to die for them. What contrary Turns would this sort of Philosophy give to this most Divine Instance of free and rich Mercy in all the Bible?

Give me leave at the end of this Catalogue of Scriptures, to cite two or three which represent to us in a more express manner, that the Will of God often determines itself

itself without such a supposition of superior Fitnesses, that he may display his own God-head, and the Independance of his Actions. Rom. ix. 15. cited from Exod. xxxiii. 19: *I will make all my Goodness to pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of the Lord before thee: and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.* Now, as the Name of the Lord is *I am what I am, or I will be what I will be*, Exod. iii. 14. so his correspondent Character in matters of pure Grace and Bounty is, *I will do what I will do*; i. e. the Will of God in matters of meer Bounty is a self-governing Principle, and is determined only by itself in his most free and sovereign Instances of Grace and Blessing; he hath no other Determination but what arises from within himself, even the Good-pleasure of his own Will.

How often is this Thought repeated in the Word of God? How frequently is this given as the only reason of his Conduct, in his Works of Creation, and in his distributions of Blessings in the Kingdom of Providence and the Kingdom of Grace? *Even so, Father, because it pleased thee.* Rev. iv. 11. *Thou hast created all things, O Lord, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* Isa. xlvi. 9, 10. *I am God, and none else . . . I will do all my pleasure.*

Matth.

Matth. xx. 14, 15. *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? I will give to this last even as unto thee.* Rom. ix. 18. *He hath mercy on whom he will.* The Blessed God, consider'd as a Creator and as a Benefactor, worketh all things according to the Counsel of his own Will; in a thousand instances his own Will is his Counsellor: He acts according to the good-pleasure of his Will which he hath purposed within himself. Eph. i. 5, 9, 11.

And here let me conclude with the Words of St. Paul, Rom. xi. 33. who, when he had been tracing out the Methods of the Conduct of God towards the Jews and Gentiles, leaves the Springs and Reasons of them all intirely within himself, and adores the great Incomprehensible; *How unsearchable are his Judgements, and his Ways past finding out! Of him and by him and for him are all things, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

---

T H E E N D.

## E R R A T A.

**P**age 6. lin. 14. Freedom of the Will. *l. last*, And so.  
p. 18. *l. 24.* for two *r.* three. p. 19. *l. 2.* to that individual Understanding. p. 22. is still supposed to determine. p. 30. *l. 9.* only by. p. 33. *l. 13.* apprehending and judging, p. 40. *l. 18.* for been *r.* actually existed. p. 42. *l. 27.* for Man *r.* Men. p. 49. *l. 8.* Tabernacle of Moses. p. 69. *l. 7.* other Reason. p. 90. *l. 5.* cancel.





